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THESIS

**THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL AND THE
CHALLENGES OF ESTABLISHING AN INTEGRATED
CAPABILITY FOR UPHOLDING SECURITY**

by

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CHALLENGES OF ESTABLISHING AN INTEGRATED
CAPABILITY FOR UPHOLDING SECURITY**

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ABSTRACT

The Gulf Cooperation Council's abysmal performance during the last thirty years clearly demonstrates that the member-states of this alliance remain unprepared to seriously commit themselves to the establishment of a credible joint defense force able to facilitate the goal of collective security for which the GCC was established in the first place. This thesis seeks explanations as to why the GCC has made little progress in establishing mechanisms to provide collective security for its members through the lenses of neorealist theory and regime theory. Neorealist theory does explain the GCC's stumble on the path to achieving collective security by expecting that the GCC would not succeed if there were other options for security, but it fails to explain the causes that led the GCC member-states to seek other security options. Applying regime theory in the case of the GCC will identify the GCC's reasons for seeking other security options. This thesis hypothesizes that the GCC failed to guarantee security to its members due to its weakness as a regime, explained by regime theory, which led the GCC member-states to seek other security options provided by external power through bilateral security agreements, as predicted by neorealism.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IS&R	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nation
U.S.	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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I. INTRODUCTION

There have been many attempts in many world regions to construct regional cooperation forums on political, economic, and, increasingly, security issues. The six Arabian Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar) came together to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) by means of an agreement formalized on May 26, 1981, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.¹ While the GCC was established in part because the states in this region share similar social values, political systems, economic programs, and visions, the primary reasons for its establishment were their security needs and connectedness.² These shared security concerns, particularly after the Iranian revolution and during the Iran-Iraq war, compelled the Gulf States to adopt the notion of “Collective Security” as an important goal for the GCC.³

The notion of collective security demanded that the GCC member-states unite their security policies and mobilize their defense capabilities. Following a series of consultative meetings by the defense ministers of the GCC states, plans to develop a joint defense system and joint command were agreed upon and drafted. As a result of these plans, a Peninsula Shield Force with the size of two brigades was established in 1984 as a step toward a greater integration of the GCC member-states’ defense and security systems.⁴

As of 2010, almost thirty years after the creation of the GCC, not much progress had been made with the initial plans to integrate the GCC member-states’ various defense systems. Rather, the collective defense systems of the GCC member-states remain unable

¹ Abdul Khaleq Abdulla, “The Gulf Cooperation Council: Nature, Origin, and Process” in *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration*, ed. Michael C. Hudson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 150.

² Rohani Ramazani, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 4.

³ Charles Tripp, “Regional Organizations in the Arab Middle East” in *Regionalism in World Politics; Regional Organization and International Order*, ed. L. Fawcett and A. Hurrell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 293.

⁴ Marco Pinfari, “Nothing But Failure? The Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council as Mediators in the Middle Eastern Conflicts,” *Regional and Global Axes of Conflict*, Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2, Paper No. 45, (March 2009): 5.

to provide necessary and anticipated security in the event of an external threat to any of the GCC members.⁵ Some GCC member-states still rely heavily on the United States of America (U.S.) and the European Union for security.⁶ Therefore, the question that still looms large is why has it been so difficult for the GCC to make any meaningful progress in building an integrated regional defense force capable of providing much-needed deterrence and security, even though the region faces imminent threats and despite its relatively large wealth?

This thesis uses the lenses of regime theory and neorealist theory to seek an explanation as to why the GCC has made so little progress in establishing the mechanisms that would provide collective security for its members. It also hypothesizes that the GCC failed to guarantee security to its members due to its weakness as a regime, as defined by regime theory, which led the GCC member-states to seek other security options provided by external power through bilateral security agreements, as predicted by neorealist theory.

A. ENVIRONMENT OF THREATS FOR THE GCC

The Middle East, particularly the Gulf Region, has been marred by a number of flash points for decades. In addition to past security challenges--including the Arab-Israeli Conflict, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR) ambition to reach to the Gulf, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Second Gulf War to liberate Kuwait--emergent security challenges such as increasing threats of terrorist attacks, and now Iran's search for nuclear weapon capability, have continued to pose threats to the Gulf region.⁷ Efforts to reduce or eliminate some of these threats rely on diplomatic negotiation and collective deterrence through regional initiatives such as the Arab League and sub-regional regimes such as the

⁵ Tripp, "Arab Middle East," 293.

⁶ Anthony Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, "Saudi Military Forces and Development: Challenges and Reforms," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (2004): 1–2.

⁷ Anthony Cordesman and Khalid Al-Rodhan, *The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 100–102.

GCC.⁸ However, many of these regional and sub-regional regimes have continued to underperform in their stated purpose of providing collective security. The search for answers to the question of why these regional and sub-regional regimes have underperformed remains incomplete.

This thesis builds on earlier attempts to provide answers to the questions of why regional and sub-regional regimes such as the GCC have not been able to provide adequate security to their member-states; it focuses on the GCC and the contributions it has made to the organization of Gulf Region security. It is the intent of this thesis, therefore, to go beyond conventional wisdom, which argues that the GCC's failure to provide security through its notion of collective security is due to the incompatibility of its weapons systems and apparatuses. This thesis examines the causes that prevented the GCC from relying on itself and strengthening its regime.

Since the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the leaders of its member-states have sought to reach a joint mechanism that would achieve their collective security. Most of the literature on the GCC focuses on explaining its failures in guaranteeing security to its members, but the discussion has been limited to the physical and leadership obstacles that have prevented progress toward collective security. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein, some imagined that the danger in the Gulf Region had passed. However, the reality was that the United States had broken the system in Iraq; this was compounded by the U.S. failure to achieve internal security in Iraq. The rise of sectarian tensions between Shiites and Sunnis signaled the beginning of new problems. Iran's influence in Iraq resulted in efforts to sway politics in favor of its interests by supporting the Shi'ites in taking and keeping power in Iraq; its pursuit of a controversial nuclear program presented the Gulf states with a new challenge. James Russell notes that the times are changing. He said that "Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-

⁸ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War*, 102.

Faisal told an audience in Bahrain in December 2004 that a new regional security framework needed to be constructed,”⁹ one that could convince the decision-makers of the Gulf states to take more effective steps to meet these challenges.

The rise of Al-Qaeda operations from within Yemen and its ability to destabilize the security of the Gulf States should also have convinced the GCC to move toward achieving collective security. Before moving forward, however, it is important to understand the real reasons behind the GCC’s failure to achieve this security during the last thirty years. It is necessary to look deeper, so as to discover the source of these obstacles and ways of avoiding them in the future, thus reaching the goal of GCC security.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been few empirical studies that provide answers to the question of why the GCC has not succeeded in meeting one of its key objectives, namely that of guaranteeing member-state security. Marco Pinfari points out, “Most of the literature dealing with the GCC was in fact produced within the first ten years of life of the organization when the interest in sub-regionalism in the Gulf region was high, partly as a consequence of the Iran-Iraq War and the 1990 Gulf War.”¹⁰ In one of those limited attempts to provide answers to similar questions, Rolin Mainuddin, et al., conclude that, as a matter of strategy, “at its inception in May 1981, the GCC did not specifically identify military security as one of the areas for regional cooperation,” which set the precedent for a lack of future progress and even outright failures in the area of security.¹¹ In fact, security only became a high priority on the GCC agenda as a result of South Yemen’s increased threats to Oman in the beginning of 1981 and a late 1981 *coup d’état* in Bahrain.¹²

⁹ James Russell, “Saudi Arabia in the 21st Century: A New Security Dilemma,” in *Middle East Policy*, xii, no. 3 (Fall 2005):65.

¹⁰ Pinfari, “Nothing But Failure,” 9.

¹¹ Rolin Mainuddin, Joseph Aicher, and Jeffrey Elliot, “From Alliance to Collective Security: Rethinking the Gulf Cooperation Council,” *Middle East Policy* 4, no. 3 (March 1996): 39–49.

¹² Ibid.

The assertion that the GCC's failure to evolve into a viable security institution is because it was not established as such at the outset stands to be challenged. However, Mainuddin, et al., argue that security was actually one of the prime motivations for the establishment of the GCC, although it was not explicitly stated by the GCC so as to avoid alarming neighboring states.¹³ On the contrary, Laura Guazzone argues, the failure to include security and defense matters at the GCC's inception was probably because "the legitimacy of the GCC for the Gulf people rests on its being instrumental to the fundamental goal of development."¹⁴ Accordingly, there is no strong link between the GCC's failures to provide security guarantees to its members and the lack of a security agenda at its inception.

Pinfari goes further and posits that the process that led to the creation of the GCC sprang from common strategic and ideological worries, rather than a long-term project of unification. He adds that the conditions that brought about the Arab League at the end of World War II were different. The fear of 1979's Iranian Islamic Revolution and its call for the spread of revolution in the region, as well as the Iraqi-Iran war in 1980s, resulted in the GCC's creation.¹⁵

Mainuddin, et al., and Muhammad Al-Musfer further argue that the subsequent agreements in 1991 between the GCC members on one hand, and Syria and Egypt on the other, to adopt new security dimensions created considerable confusion and challenges for the GCC regarding the appropriate security strategy. Such confusion and challenges stem from the "Declaration of Damascus" of March 6, 1991, which called for a security structure that ensured Pan-Arab expansion.¹⁶

Al-Musfer contends that the concept of regional security was eroded first by the Gulf Wars and then by internationalizing the priorities of Gulf security. These priorities have shifted from addressing the security threats posed by Israel to those threats

¹³ Mainuddin et al., "Collective Security," 39–49.

¹⁴ Laura Guazzone, "Gulf Cooperation Council: The Security Policies" in *Survival* 30, no. 2 (1988): 134–148.

¹⁵ Pinfari, "Nothing But Failure?," 4.

¹⁶ Mainuddin et al., "Collective Security," 39–49.

generated within the Gulf Region by some member-states, such as Iraq and Iran. The first Gulf War turned Iran into a primary threat, while the Second Gulf War saw Iraq replace Iran as the primary threat. The 1991 agreement between the GCC states and Syria and Egypt, referred to as the “Declaration of Damascus” allowed Syrian and Egyptian troops to remain in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait after their participation in the Second Gulf War, which in a way, was a new version of Pan-Arab collective security that failed before it was applied. Al-Musfer argues that this new regional security failed as a result of pressure from Iran, which viewed the agreement as a disadvantage to its security. Additionally, Israel opposed the agreement, especially the involvement of Syria, because of continual conflict between the two nations. Therefore, Egyptian and Syrian troops withdrew from the Gulf. A few weeks later, another declaration in Riyadh called for a security structure that ensured direct Western involvement and support.¹⁷ These additional agreements undermined the GCC’s ability to provide collective security as was originally intended.

Studies by Charles Wallace, Richard Schofield, and Marco Pinfari conclude that although the GCC is a regional security institution that attempts to provide security to the Gulf States, it remains operationally ineffective, as demonstrated by its inability to deter Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent threat to Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s.¹⁸ Some of the failures of the GCC to evolve into an effective security institution stem from increased U.S. security guarantees to the Gulf Region.¹⁹ Over the years, the GCC member-states have relied individually on the U.S. and on the EU for security and

¹⁷ Muhammad Al-Musfer, *Al-Tahaddiat Al-Amniah Ldawal Majles Al-Ta’awon Al-Khaligi, A-Majalah Al-Elmiah Lekuliat Al-Idarah Wa Al-Igtesad*, trans. by the author, no. 9 (April 1998), 15.

¹⁸ Charles Wallace, “Airpower and the Emerging U.S. Security Framework for the Persian Gulf,” (Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 15; Richard Schofield, “Boundaries, Territorial Disputes and the GCC States” in *Gulf Security in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. D. E. Long and C. Koch (London: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997), 146; Pinfari, “Nothing But Failure,” 15–16.

¹⁹ Wallace, “Security Framework,” 15.

defense support systems. This overreliance on external security guarantees has created a laxity within the GCC regarding the development of independent “functional coordination and cooperation.”²⁰

James Russell, Matteo Legrenzi, Kristian Ulrichsen, and Muhammad Al-Musfer conclude that disputes among the member-states and the lack of a common threat perception are at the top of the list of reasons why the GCC states have not organized themselves into an overarching security construct. Instead of consolidating the relationship among GCC states in order to achieve collective security, these disputes increased at the end of Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Legrenzi adds that the signing by Bahrain and Qatar of bilateral free trade agreements with the United States in 2004 risked undermining a customs union that had come into existence in 2003, and increased tensions among the GCC states. At the same time, it showed an increasingly independent tendency by the smaller GCC member-states in their foreign policy-making, which could undermine the GCC’s role. Saudi Arabia’s objection to the building of the Bahrain-Qatar freeway in 2005, over claims that it would cross Saudi sovereign waters, further highlighted how critical the perception of sovereignty remains in the Gulf.

The complex trade relations between some Gulf states and Iran limit these states’ willingness to consider Iran as a common menace. Russell, et al., argue, “There is no strategic consensus on who the GCC should guard against.”²¹ A lack of agreement and differences in views of threats as more or less important, accounts for the mostly symbolic Peninsula Shield, which was originally intended to defend the GCC states from Iran. Some states see Iran as the most important threat they have to deal with, while others see Iran as a permanent neighbor sharing with them history, religion, and trade and one that should be contained through diplomatic ways.

Al-Musfer, Ulrichsen, and Legrenzi further assert that the GCC’s failure to achieve collective security is partially explained by the smaller member-states’ concerns

²⁰ Wallace, “Security Framework,” 16.

²¹ Russell, “Saudi Arabia in the 21st Century: A New Security Dilemma,” 65; Matteo Legrenzi, “The Peninsula Shield Force: End of a Symbol?” *Gulf Research Center* no. 3 (July 2006): 11; Kristian Ulrichsen, “Internal and External Security in the Arab Gulf State,” *Middle East Policy* (Summer 2009): 41; Al-Musfer, “Tahaddiat,” 21:

regarding Saudi dominance in the region. According to Ulrichsen, “Lingering interregional disputes and fears of Saudi hegemony on the part of the smaller member-states have hampered progress toward security cooperation.”²² During the 1986 meeting that led to establishment of the Peninsula Shield force, Kuwait, Oman, and the UAE insisted on a proviso that when the force enters one member’s territory the command structure shifts from Saudi Arabia to that of the host country. This insistence underlines the anxiety of smaller member-states with regard to possible Saudi interference in their internal affairs and the symbolic nature of joint military enterprises.²³

A study by Anthony Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid on the challenges, reforms, and development of the Saudi Military Forces concludes that the Saudi military, which is comparably the biggest in terms of force size and defense budget and acquisition, must reform in order to guarantee security for Saudi Arabia in the midst of various threats in the Gulf Region, especially those posed by countries such as Iran, which is rapidly pursuing nuclear weapons capability. In many ways, this conclusion indicated that Saudi Arabia could not rely exclusively on the GCC for its security. The study highlights the main reason that would compel Saudi Arabia to not rely on the GCC to guarantee security for its member-states; that is, the lack of “true integration of security efforts” among the member-states’ militaries. This lack of true integration of security efforts takes the form of combined inadequacy in interoperability at all levels,²⁴ which leads to a lack of progress in developing effective information technology, as well as a failure to develop the Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (IS&R) and net-centric systems that could tie together the GCC member-states’ forces.

Emile El-Hokayem and Matteo Legrenzi add that the GCC regimes are inherently unwilling to build an effective military that could achieve collective security for them. “The most that could be said about the Peninsula shield force is that it existed but to

²² Ulrichsen, “Internal and External Security,” 41.

²³ Legrenzi, “Peninsula Shield Force,” 11.

²⁴ Cordesman and Obaid, “Saudi Military Force,” 1–2.

fulfill a symbolic role,”²⁵ and as a result it has remained ineffective for more than twenty years. In the opinion of Gulf rulers, the risks of setting up an effective standing army outweigh any benefits that could be obtained. El-Hokayem and Legrenzi point out, “Professional standing armies have a tendency to eventually seize the power in the Arab Middle East.”²⁶ Gulf rulers remain wary of the role the army can play in their societies after seeing military coups in Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Libya over the last fifty years. The prospect of armies without members of royal families in key positions of responsibility is a very sensitive issue for the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula.²⁷

Legrenzi further argues that the Peninsula Shield force is a clear demonstration of the symbolic nature of GCC defense cooperation. The GCC’s modest achievement in the field of defense integration in the form of a Peninsula Shield is consequential for many reasons, but there are two that are especially important. First, the acquisition of a disparate array of military hardware and software prevents the interoperability of weapons systems, which is one of the necessary steps in the direction of defense collaboration and integration. Second, a manpower shortage prevented the GCC states from agreeing to the post-Gulf War Omani proposal for Peninsula Shield expansion that was recommended by the Omani government. Moreover, it is unlikely that the leaders of these rentier states will rush to recruit a well-disciplined, fully functioning modern army.²⁸

The conventional wisdom in most of the literature written on the collective security mechanism of the GCC has concluded that, although the Gulf states that constitute the GCC have special relations, common values, similar political systems, and shared common goals, the GCC has not been successful in guaranteeing security for its

²⁵ Legrenzi, “The Peninsula Shield Force,” 11.

²⁶ Emile El-Hokayem and Matteo Legrenzi, “The Arab Gulf States in the Shadow of the Iranian Nuclear Challenge,” *The Henry L. Stimson Center* (May 2006): 4.

²⁷ Matteo Legrenzi, “Did the GCC Make a Difference? Institutional Realities and (Un) intended Consequences,” in *Beyond Regionalism?*, ed. Cilja Harders and Matteo Legrenzi (England: Ashgate, 2006), 108.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

members because of the incompatibility of the GCC member-states' defense systems.²⁹ To date, there is not enough evidence to show that there has been a detailed examination of the reasons for such incompatibilities. There has also been limited examination of the GCC in terms of the domestic politics of each of the member-states and in terms of an overlap between conflict resolution and the collective security mandate of the GCC; this has hindered efforts to reach an explanation for the GCC's limited success in guaranteeing security for its members.

C. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

The idea behind the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) can be traced to the British government's 1968 declaration of withdrawal from the Gulf Area. New Arabian Gulf states, which achieved their independence from Britain in 1971, sought to cooperate and create closer ties in order to establish a system of one political goal, aimed at uniting their defense and economic systems. As a result of intensive negotiations, in May 1981, the GCC was established in Riyadh after Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and the UAE forged an alliance in the form of the GCC Regime. The declaration of the GCC's establishment underlined the special relationship between the member-states, the similarity of their political systems, their shared destiny, and their mutual objectives. The member-states came together to facilitate their common market as a regional economic power. The GCC also established a defense planning council to manage its efforts to achieve collective security. To that end, the GCC considers aggression against any one of the member-states as deemed an aggression against all of them; thus, cooperation in military arena is at the core of its establishment.

The GCC was formed to collectively address security challenges from external threats. The threat of the Iran-Iraq War and the Iranian Revolution and its efforts to export Islamic revolution to Arab side of the Gulf were the incentive behind this cooperation in collective security. The exclusion of Iraq was due to the difference in the

²⁹ Cordesman and Obaid, "Saudi Military Forces," 1–2.

nature of the Iraqi regime and the previous policies of its leaders against Kuwait. Iraq also has a population made up of different ethnicities, in contrast to the similar ethnicity of the populations of the Arab Gulf States.

In 1984, and after intense discussions, the GCC defense ministers reached an agreement on the creation a force made up of two brigades, named Peninsula Shield. This rapid intervention force has been stationed in King Khalid Military City at Hafar al Batin in Saudi Arabia's Northern province. After the Liberation of Kuwait in 1991, and in reaction to the shock of their force's weakness during the invasion of Kuwait, the GCC agreed with Syria and Egypt, in the 1991 "Declaration of Damascus," to deploy Syrian and Egyptian troops in some Gulf States so as to help defend Kuwait and the other GCC member-states against any external aggression. This decision was abandoned due to the reasons explained earlier and after Kuwait signed a bilateral security agreement with the United States and Britain. In 2005, the GCC decided to further develop the Peninsula Shield by increasing its manpower to 30,000; however, it was agreed that these forces would remain on-call in their home countries until needed.

The ambition of the GCC member-states to achieve a collective security mechanism has been hampered by a lack of agreement on the strategic decisions that would lead to that goal. As a result, plans to integrate their capabilities under a joint command and defense network have been delayed because of incompatibilities across their weapons systems that were acquired from different countries. Further, the Peninsula Shield force's mission was not clear; for example, it was created to meet external threats, but in the Second Gulf War, it did not participate as a separate army. While the ambitions behind the GCC's creation were substantial, its achievements have not been as expected. One notable success of the GCC, however, was linking the member-states via an early-warning military communications network.

D. NEOREALISM THEORY AND COOPERATION

Neorealism, or structural realism, is a theory of international relations that modifies classical realism. Classical realism defines international politics as a struggle between states, and is based on the concept of human nature. In contrast, neorealism sees

the behavior of states as being constrained by international structures, positing that there is a level above the state level, which is the “structure level.” To explain this, neorealist theory separates the state level from the system level. They describe the relation between these levels as one of causes and results; at the system level, one sees the causes and at the state level, the results. These results are determined by the structure of the international system, a system characterized by anarchy. The structure is shaped by states employing the principle of self-help to survive; this tendency to seek survival is the primary factor that shapes their behavior. Neorealism views states as similar in their necessities, but different in their ability to achieve these necessities. Thus, states will develop their military capabilities in order to ensure their security.³⁰

The inability of states to know each other’s intentions causes mistrust, which in turn leads to security dilemmas. The difference between states, in terms of their structural distribution of capability, limits cooperation between them, because of the fear of relative gain, which leads them to balance power.³¹ This balance of power can be achieved by increasing the states’ own capabilities, or by forming an alliance if there is a common threat; this was the GCC’s situation as it watched the rise of Iraq after the Iraq-Iran War, and Iran after the United States’ 2003 invasion of Iraq. Neorealism expects conflicts to be ever-present and cooperation to be rare; when it does happen, it tends to only be temporary. They constrain the probability of cooperation between states in a situation where all of them confront a common rising threat.

E. NEOREALISM AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY

Collective Security is a system or a form of cooperation in which members of a regime agree that an attack against one of them will be treated as an attack against all of them, resulting in a collective military response. It is also described as system where states create institutions in order to prevent wars, such as the United Nations. States may also form an alliance and establish a regime exclusively for collective defense and as a

³⁰ James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey* (New York: Longman: 2001), 80–93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 94–99.

preemptive collective security mechanism in the face of a threat, telling potential aggressors that an attack against any one would be considered an attack against all, and that they will work together to deter the attacker. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an example of a collective security organization that was created as military tool only.³² However, a regime can also take the form of an institution that includes economic, diplomatic, and military establishments as elements of power. The GCC is an example of the kind of organization that includes all of these elements; however, this thesis focuses only on the military side of collective security.

Neorealism argues that cooperation comes about as the result of efforts to form an alliance as a regime to provide collective security only if there is rising threat. Collective security here is defined as an effort to prevent hegemony from arising and threatening the security of all other states. neorealist theory would expect this sort of cooperation to end when the threat is eliminated. It also argues that collective security is doomed to fail because of the self-help nature of anarchy, and so does not expect the regime to succeed if there are other options for providing security.

F. GCC AS A REGIME

This thesis examines the GCC as a Regime by applying the regime theory in two related case studies, but before doing so it is important to understand what a regime is. Stephen Krasner defines a regime as a “set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors expectations converge in given areas of international relations.”³³ Keohane and Nye define a regime as “set of governing arrangements that include networks of rules, norms and procedures that regularize behavior and control its effect.”³⁴ Haas says, “A regime encompasses a mutually coherent set of procedure, rules, and norms.”³⁵ According to Krasner, principles are

³² Charles A. Kupchan, Clifford A. Kupchan, “Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe,” *International Security* (Summer 1991): 121–123.

³³ Stephen Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regime as Intervening Variables,” in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen Krasner (Cornell University Press, London, 1983), 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards and behavior defined in terms of right and commitment. Rules are specific prescriptions or prohibitions of action. Decision-making procedures are the dominant practices for making and executing collective choice. Unlike alliances in the Neorealist view of cooperation, regimes are not temporary arrangements for temporary purposes. It is also important to distinguish between regimes and agreements. Although agreements are reached for a specific purpose and are often established for a limited time-frame, regimes should provide their members with forms of cooperation that facilitate this cooperation over the long term, while serving collective interests that also reflect the self-interest of each member-state.³⁶

G. CONCLUSION

The Arabian Gulf is a part of the Middle East, which is the most instable region in the world. The Gulf is a uniquely important to the rest of the world due to its large oil and gas reserves; these reserves meet the fuel needs of most of the world. Thus, the security of the Gulf Region has been not just the concern of its states, but of the whole world, with many efforts being made to stabilize the region over time. Not only has the Gulf experienced many conflicts in the past, but it also continues to face the possibility of others in the future. Because of the region's history of instability, the Arab Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Oman formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981 as a means of achieving their shared goals of prosperity and security from potential threats. However, almost thirty years from the GCC's creation, little progress has been made to create a mechanism of collective security from within the GCC itself. The GCC states still rely on external powers to guarantee their security, even though they have the resources to increase their capabilities to balance the regional powers. The question of why the GCC States have stumbled in their attempts to reach to a mechanism of collective security is the purpose of this thesis.

This chapter reviewed literature concerning the GCC to see if this question has been answered or not; however, the literature examined was limited to considering the results of the GCC's decisions and their implications for the GCC as a whole. Few efforts

³⁶ Krasner, "Regime Consequences," 2.

have been made to investigate the decision-making process of GCC and its effect on the strength of the GCC as a regime. To determine what this decision-making process is, this chapter explained the two theories that will be used in this thesis to see if either explains the GCC's inability to achieve collective security in the Gulf. It also examined the relationship between neorealist theory and Cooperation on one hand, and Collective Security on the other. It then looked to regime theory and gave the reader an overview of the concept as explained in the literature. This information will aid in understanding the analysis provided in Chapter III.

Chapter II presents the two case studies used in this thesis. The first case examines the Invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and how the GCC prepared for and responded to such incidents, as well as what it did to prevent such threats from recurring. The second case study looks at Iran as a threat, especially after the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq; this case also considers how the invasion of Iraq instigated a new shift in power in the Gulf and the threat that Iran poses to the GCC.

Chapter III of this thesis studies the GCC as an alliance, according to neorealist theory, which expects such an alliance to fail to achieve collective security if there are other options for achieving security, and as a regime according to regime theory, which explains how the GCC became a weak regime that forces its member-states to seek other options for achieving security. Chapter IV is the conclusion chapter that provides the reader with a summary of what has been covered in this thesis.

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II. CASE STUDIES

To study the failure of the GCC states in achieving collective security, it is essential to examine and analyze the GCC's response and performance in certain cases. This thesis considers two cases: the 1990 Invasion of Kuwait and the current threat posed by Iran. This chapter presents the facts of these two cases.

The first case, that of the Invasion of Kuwait, saw Iraq invading Kuwait after accusing it of stealing Iraqi oil for eight years and waging "economic war" against Iraq through the overproduction of oil; the invasion also provided Iraq with a way to ease the severe financial pressure it was under, which had arisen from an inability to pay billions of dollars used to finance its war with Iran. This chapter considers the following factors: the nature of the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait; how the GCC member-states dealt with the crisis; whether they faced the crises collectively, or individually; and, finally, whether the incentive behind the Saudi essential decision of inviting the American was in the interest of the GCC's collective security or Saudi national security only.

In the second case, that of the current Iranian threat to the rest of the Gulf Region, the GCC has serious concerns about the influence of Iranian ideology on the Shi'ite population in its member-states; this influence has grown since the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. Iran's new leaders called for exporting the revolution, especially to the Gulf states, in order to delegitimize their rulers. Iraq was the Arab defender who stopped Iranian ambitions and balanced power in the Gulf. Following the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq, this balance of power between Iraq and Iraq has shifted, so that the Iranian threat has increased in various ways. The threats presented by Iran have shifted from threatened interference with the GCC to actual interference, and from threatened hegemony to actual hegemony. This chapter provides an explanation of the Iranian threat, beginning with the Islamic Revolution, through the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq will shed light on shifts in the balance of power resulting from the removal of Saddam Hussein's Sunni government and how Iran exploited this new situation to further its interests in the region.

A. INVASION OF KUWAIT

The question of whether Iraq decided to invade Kuwait after the end of its war with Iran, or as the result to what Saddam Hussein called “economic warfare” waged by Kuwait against Iraq, remains controversial. After the end of Iraq-Iran war, it would have been logical for Iraq to transition from its “war face” to that of a modern state, but instead Iraq began building up a huge arsenal of weapons that alarming its neighbors in the region. These acquisitions of weapons provoked the West and Israel to launch a propaganda campaign against Iraq that resulted in an escalation of Iraq’s tone against Israel and the West. Saddam exploited these campaigns against Iraq to create a picture of himself as the “Savior Leader” of the Arab World against Israel and the West. At the same time, he provoked and then escalated a crisis with Kuwait regarding oil prices and quotas.

The historical friction between Iraq and Kuwait dates back to Kuwait’s independence in 1961, at which time Kuwait rejected claims made by Iraqi President Abdul Kareem Qasim that Kuwait was part of Iraq and his calls for annexing it. On June 25, 1963, Qasim stated, “Iraq has decided to ... demand the land [of Kuwait] arbitrarily held by imperialism, which belongs to the province of Basra.”³⁷ From the 1963 coup led by President Abdul Salam Arif until 1989, all Iraqi claims about Kuwait centered on the borders between the two nations and on two islands, called Bubiyan and Warbah, which Iraq needed in order to access the Gulf. “The delineation of the Kuwait-Iraq boundary is an outstanding problem which has preoccupied every Iraqi regime from the 1960s onwards, with no solution as yet.”³⁸ After the end of the war between Iraq and Iran, Saddam dreamed of making Iraq the hegemonic power in the Gulf and the chief competitive power against Israel and the West in the region; however, Iraq had come out of the war burdened by debt and intolerable internal difficulties. In these circumstances,

³⁷ Dilip Hiro, *Desert Shield To Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 9.

³⁸ Ali Al-Damkhi, *Invasion: Saddam Hussain’s Reign of Terror in Kuwait* (Kuwait Research and Advertising Co. Ltd, 1992), 3.

Iraq had two choices: to reduce military expenditures in order to develop Iraq's economy, or to find additional sources of income in order to build up its military power and develop its economy.³⁹

Because the first option meant reducing the size of Iraq's military forces and abandoning his hegemonic ambitions, Saddam chose the second option. Development of economic resources would require a long period of time, especially considering that oil prices are subject to international market prices, so it seemed that the shortest way to solve Iraq's economic difficulties and to achieve Saddam's political ambitions of hegemonic power was to exploit Iraq's huge military power. The occupation and annexation of Kuwait would not only eliminate the debt resulting from the war with Iran, but also would give Iraq access to the Gulf through Kuwait's coasts. As Saddam himself explained, "the state that has the greatest influence in the region through the Gulf and its oil will maintain its superiority as a superpower."⁴⁰ As a way of reducing potential regional reactions to his military adventure, Saddam signed a non-aggression pact with Saudi Arabia and worked behind the scenes in the establishment of the "Arab Cooperation Council" in 1989.

At the beginning of 1990, Saddam accused Kuwait of exceeding its oil production quota thus pushing oil prices downward. Iraq's demands at the beginning of the crisis centered on Kuwait's exceeding the oil production quota and the resulting fall in oil prices; however, the ambiguous and stubborn stand of Kuwait complicated the situation. Iraq's demand that oil quotas be maintained was reasonable at that time because Iraq had just ended an eight-year war with Iran, and needed to maximize its oil revenues as much as possible in order to redevelop its economy, as well as building its military power to the level required to be regional power.⁴¹ When Saudi Arabia and Jordan tried to resolve the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, they found that the gap between the two countries went beyond the difference in their Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

³⁹ Roland Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992), 13–15.

⁴⁰ Saddam Hussein in his speech at the summit of Arabian Cooperation Council on February 24, 1990.

⁴¹ Alberto Bin, Richard Hill, and Archer Jones, *Desert Storm: A Forgotten War* (Praeger Publishers, 1998), 4–12.

shares and oil prices. As is so often the case, disputes between individuals and communities led to a reoccurrence of past differences that complicated the situation even more. Iraq soon demanded Kuwait (1) a settlement about border disputes, especially those centering on the Rumaila oil field; (2) agreement on leasing Bubiyan and Warbah in order to provide Iraq with access to the Gulf; and (3) a write-off of Iraq's debts with Kuwait.

1. Official Emergence of the Crisis between Kuwait and Iraq

During the Arab summit held in Bagdad in May 1990, Saddam expressed his complaints that some Gulf States were hurting Iraq's economy and compared their actions to "economic warfare" against Iraq by exceeding their OPEC oil production quotas, telling the gathered Arab leaders that Iraq could not tolerate this pressure any longer. He elaborated, "Continuing overproduction of oil, and its consequent effect on prices, was a kind of war against Iraq.... we have reached a point where we can no longer withstand pressure."⁴² However, in this summit, Saddam kept the door open for the diplomacy to resolve the oil dispute with Kuwait. Nevertheless, in a July 17, 1990, speech on the anniversary of Al-Ba'ath Revolution, Saddam blamed the Iraq's "economic crises" on Kuwait and the UAE, who he accused of exceeding OPEC oil production quotas and seeking to push down crude oil prices. In this speech Saddam also said that the Iraq of 1990 and beyond would not be the Iraq of 1981, and accused "the Gulf rulers as being agents of imperialism, and of waging 'economic warfare' on Iraq and at the first time he threatened by military intervention to fix this problem."⁴³ Moreover, Saddam's regime continued its campaign against Kuwait; Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz filed a memorandum with the Arab League alleging that Kuwait had exploited the circumstances of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88) in order to steal \$2.5 billion in Iraqi oil from the Rumaila field and built military positions in Iraqi territory.⁴⁴

⁴² Bin, Hill, and Jones, *Desert Storm*, 11.

⁴³ Hiro, *Desert Shield to Desert Storm*, 49.

⁴⁴ Al-Damkhi, *Invasion*, 2.

2. Kuwait Response to Iraqi Claims

Kuwait was able to prevent Saddam from playing the oil prices card by maintaining the OPEC oil production quotas that had been agreed to by its members, but the stubbornness of the Kuwaiti position, which appeared in the statement of the Kuwaiti Oil Minister to the Wall Street Journal that Kuwait would continue exceeding its oil quotas and would not adhere with OPEC quotas, increased tensions and gave Saddam a reason to escalate the crisis.⁴⁵ Kuwaitis at that time did not believe that Iraq would invade and occupy Kuwait; rather, they thought that Saddam was largely bluffing in an attempt to gain leverage in ongoing OPEC talks. Even the pessimists among them believed that Saddam would at most seize a Kuwaiti oil field just across the border.

On July 18, 1990, and as a response to Saddam's speech, Kuwait's government sent an answering memorandum to the Arab League stating that it had received the Iraqi memo with amazement and surprise. Kuwait's Former Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed said, "Kuwait set out the material and moral support provided by Kuwait to Iraq at all levels."⁴⁶ Kuwait rejected all Iraqi claims, stating that it had suffered as much as Iraq from the collapse of oil prices and denied Iraq's allegations that it intended to destroy the Iraqi economy. Kuwait also insisted that all oil produced from the Rumaila field was from Kuwaiti territory. Kuwait sent several messages to Arab leaders and to the Secretary General of the United Nation explaining the Kuwaiti position regarding Iraqi claims. Additionally, on July 19, 1990, the UAE responded to Iraqi claims that the UAE was attempting to harm Iraq economically, sending a letter to the Secretary General of the Arab League that rejected these claims, stating that this way of treating Arab disputes was against Arab interests and solidarity. However, Iraq maintained its position regarding Kuwait and, further, claimed that Iraq was defending Gulf security. Iraq asserted that Kuwait was the first state to benefit from the Iraq-Iran War, but that, even so, Kuwait intended to harm Iraq, in service to the "imperial powers" of United States and Europe as

⁴⁵ "Economic Aspect of Iran-Iraq Crisis (1980–1990)," trans. by the author, last modified February 2011, <http://www.moqatel.com/openshare/IraqKwit/7sec/index.htm>.

⁴⁶ Al-Damkhi, *Invasion*, 2.

Saddam said.⁴⁷ As the situation between Iraq and Kuwait intensified, many efforts were made by Egypt, Jordan, and finally Saudi Arabia to settle the dispute before it exploded.

3. Efforts to Settle the Dispute

From the beginning of the crisis between Kuwait and Iraq, all of the attempts at resolving the dispute were made by individual nations, except for the discussion within OPEC that resulted from Iraq's complaints that overproduction on the part of some states was pushing oil prices down. Before Saddam's speech of July 17, 1990 and those made in response to it, no one believed that this dispute would grow any more serious; thus, the only attempts to settle the dispute were made by the King of Jordan, the President of Egypt, and the Saudi government. After July 17, efforts to resolve the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait took a serious tack, but were still largely friendly attempts on the part of individual states, not institutional ones.

4. The GCC's Role Prior to the Invasion

The invasion of Kuwait was the first challenge for the GCC states since its creation in 1981. Although Kuwait on July 18, 1990 had requested an emergency meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Kuwait, and had also requested that the Arab League intervene, the region's inclination was to avoid exaggerating tensions, hoping the situation would be resolved amicably. For this reason, no meetings took place before Iraq invaded Kuwait. The GCC had avoided any meeting before the invasion in the hopes of not angering Saddam if it dealt with him collectively. The situation in the region had established a complex environment similar to the situation in Europe prior to the World War II. None of the Gulf nations wanted to believe that Iraq would invade them, hoping instead to satisfy Saddam while at the same time fearing that their attempts to calm the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait would be seen as a weakness. There were concerns that these overtures would only encourage Saddam to make more demands. Thus, the GCC

⁴⁷ Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990–1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1993), 47–50.

did not hold any meetings to discuss the dispute at either the level of Supreme Council or at the level of the Council of Ministers. Instead, all the efforts at pacifying Saddam were made individually by the member-states.

5. Attempts to Solve the Crisis After July 17, 1990

After Saddam escalated the crisis officially through his speech of July 17, 1990, and the memorandum he sent to the Arab League, many Arab leaders realized the dangerous trend of the crisis after these memorandum and the accusations and new language threatening Kuwait that they contained. Even though Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) made concerted efforts to resolve the crises, it was too late. The Iraqi army was already positioned near Kuwait's borders. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt visited Saddam in Bagdad on July 24, 1990, in an attempt to mitigate the tension between Iraq and Kuwait. Saddam promised Mubarak that he did not intend to use force against Kuwait and his only goal was to put pressure to agree to Iraqi demands on Kuwait.⁴⁸ Yasser Arafat, the leader of PLO, also tried to calm the situation, but Saddam instead sent him to Kuwait to ask for a loan of ten billion dollars, which Kuwait refused. Finally, Saudi Arabia made a last-ditch effort, hosting the Jeddah Conference between Iraq and Kuwait.⁴⁹

6. The Jeddah Conference

“When the Kuwaiti-Iraq crisis escalated in the last week of July, King Fahad of Saudi Arabia convened a meeting between the two parties to discuss outstanding bilateral issues.”⁵⁰ Saudi Arabia attempts were individual efforts, not collectively, through the GCC collectively was supposed to be the case. Saudi Arabia sent its Foreign Minister to Bagdad on July 28, 1990, to invite the Iraqi delegation to meet with their Kuwaiti counterparts in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The goal of this meeting was to negotiate their dispute under the Saudi sponsorship. On the same day, the Foreign Minister went to Kuwait and made the same invitation for the Kuwaitis; both Iraq and Kuwait accepted

⁴⁸ Hiro, *Desert Shield To Desert Storm*, 90–93.

⁴⁹ Al-Damkhi, *Invasion*, 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

this initiative. The Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, Izzet Ibrahim ad-Douri, headed Iraqi's delegation, while Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheik Saad Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation.

The meeting was held in Jeddah over two sessions. The Iraqi delegation repeated its same demands: write-off Iraq's debts, additional loans, transfer of the Rumaila oil field to Iraq, and reimbursement for ten years' exploitation of the Rumaila field. The Kuwaiti delegation refused the Iraqi demands at the beginning, and later stipulated that a discussion of the borders had to precede any agreement on the other points of contention. The Iraqi delegation refused any discussion other than their demands, and withdrew from the meeting, promising to hold other meeting in Iraq and Kuwait later. The negotiation lasted for two days without making any progress; on the evening of August 1, 1990, both delegations returned to their respective countries and blamed each other for the failure of the Jeddah talks.⁵¹ There are different accounts to what happen in Jeddah, and the fact is that no one knows exactly what happened at that meeting. What is clear is that after the talks ended, Iraq invaded Kuwait.

7. The Invasion

At 12:00 a.m. on August 2, 1990, Iraqi troops crossed Kuwait's borders. Iraq had been preparing its troops for months before the invasion, and Saddam had chosen the month of August because most Kuwaitis were vacationing abroad. Compounding its problems, Kuwait had not mobilized its forces in the hopes of avoiding Iraq's anger; as a result, very few troops were stationed at the borders. Even though Kuwait did eventually mobilize all of its troops, it could not stop the Iraqi army, the fourth largest in the world at that time. Kuwait and the rest of the international community had not expected that Iraq would go beyond occupying the oil fields near the border if the situation developed

⁵¹ Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, *War in The Gulf, 1990–91: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications* (New York, Oxford, 1997), 114–117.

to full-scale military conflict. Instead, Saddam occupied the whole of Kuwait, annexing it to Al-Basra County. Saddam's plans also included seizing or killing the prince of Kuwait and his family, but most of the ruling family fled to Saudi Arabia.⁵²

8. GCC's Role After the Invasion

Although the GCC member-states had avoided any meeting to discuss the crisis between Kuwait and Iraq before the invasion, they quickly called a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Cairo on August 3, 1990, condemning the invasion and calling for immediate Iraqi withdrawal. They met again in Jeddah on August 7 and demanded that Iraq heed the Arab League and U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for its withdrawal from Kuwait and rejected any new status that might emerge based on the invasion. The GCC also stated that they agreed on the best means to confront the invasion. The GCC member-states clearly and explicitly stated that they stood with Kuwait against the Iraqi invasion. It was clear that the member-states had understood the threat that Iraq and Iran posed to their countries from the time of the GCC's creation, but they had not reached a Collective Security mechanism in preparation for this critical time. They only initiated close cooperation when they realized the imminent threat to the region, and even then, their primary concern was how to work with the international community in order to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

9. Saudi Arabia's Role After the Invasion

The only person more shocked by the invasion of Kuwait than the Kuwaitis is King Fahad of Saudi Arabia. He was a friend to Saddam Husain and had trusted Saddam when he asserted that Iraq would not attack Kuwait. When Saudi Arabia learned of the invasion, King Fahad called Saddam to ask what was happening; Saddam told the King that he would send Vice-Chairman of the Revolution Command Council Izzet Ibrahim ad-Douri to explain the situation to him. However, after ad-Douri emphasized yet again

⁵² Khadduri and Ghareeb, *War in The Gulf, 1990–91*, 21–122.

that Kuwait was part of Iraq, while at the same time promising that Iraq would not invade Saudi Arabia, King Fahad realized how grave the situation was that had arisen from Saddam's ambitions and adventure.

For four days after the invasion, Saudi Arabia tried to find an Arab solution to the crisis, one based on Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and the Kuwaiti government's return on power, but without success. During that time, Saudi Arabia heard many reports that Iraq was mobilizing its troops on the Saudi borders, but the Saudis preferred to wait for the Arab League resolution. On August 3, the Arab League agreed on a resolution, which called for a solution to the crisis from within the League and warned against outside intervention.⁵³ For Saudi Arabia, time was critical, as any delay in withdrawing Iraqi troops from Kuwait would put Saudi Arabia under security pressure; to make matters worse, no one at that time knew what Saddam's intentions were. It was a difficult time for the Saudi Arabian government, which was both attempting to resolve the crisis and dealing with the reports that talked of Iraqi troops mobilizing near the Saudi borders.

10. Saudi Decision to Call on Foreign Forces

King Fahad's decision to request that the U.S. and other nations send troops to defend Saudi Arabia against any Iraqi attempt to cross the Saudi-Kuwaiti borders was surely the most difficult that any king of Saudi Arabia has made. Prince Khalid bin Sultan in his book *Desert Warrior* claims that the Saudi decision to ask the Americans for help was not related to the satellite images that were produced by then-Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney purporting to show Iraqi forces massing on the Saudi borders. Rather, bin Sultan states that Saudi Arabia had made a long-standing decision that it would ask for outside help if its sovereignty was exposed to threats could not faced by its own military forces.⁵⁴ Although Saudi Arabia had considered the possibility of calling for help from outside power if the danger is greater than their ability to meet it in drawing up its military strategy, the satellite images obtained by the Americans finally convinced King Fahad that the threat was imminent and that it was the time to put this strategy into

⁵³ Khalid bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 19.

⁵⁴ Sultan, *Warrior*, 23.

action. Saudi Arabia's decision to ask for U.S. assistance was made as an individual state, not as a GCC decision. They may have coordinated with the other GCC states in other areas, but not in making the request. It was a decision for self-survival in the face of an imminent threat.⁵⁵

11. GCC Role During the Military Build-Up

The Invasion of Kuwait was the most serious challenge that the GCC had faced up to that time. It would have been better able to respond to this crisis if its members had put their internal disputes aside and thought strategically of the GCC as a regime created after they all agreed on its norms, principles, and roles. Instead, they had spent ten years following the council's creation moving slowly in the direction of the main reason for its establishment—collective security to face a regional crisis. The GCC member-states had not realized that Iraq could be a threat to them one day, but, failing to understand that an Iraqi government that killed its own people would be anything other than friendly to its neighbors, instead believed that any conflict in the region would come from Iran. As a result, they had not prepared for that point; despite having created a Peninsula Shield army, they continued to have differing visions of its staffing, role, and leadership.

Finally, the GCC realized that it was weak and understood that the threat posed by Iraq was real and imminent. As posited in the Neorealist theory of alliances (that is, states cooperate to balance against threats), the GCC did come together in the face of Saddam's aggression, but only after one of its member-states was forcibly occupied. The member-states finally put aside their disputes and overcame all of the other obstacles that had prevented them from achieving the collective security required to protect them from regional threats. They cooperated and coordinated with each other in all areas, whether political, economic, or military. Politically, they affirmed the Arab League and Security Council resolutions that called for withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and the return of the Kuwaiti government. Economically, they offered liquidity and funded the military build-up of the international coalition force that was formed by thirty-four nations, led by the United States, to push Iraq out from Kuwait. Militarily, the "four Gulf countries-

⁵⁵ Khadduri and Ghareeb, *War*, 131–132.

Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman- decided not to take part in the military operations because of their relatively small military forces, but they participated logistically and by offering technical supports.”⁵⁶

12. GCC Role After the Liberation of Kuwait

After exhausting all diplomatic efforts to convince Saddam’s regime to withdraw from Kuwait, the international coalition waged a war against Iraq; this alliance defeated Iraq and liberated Kuwait. Following the war, the GCC held many meeting at all levels in order to further its efforts to reach to collective security mechanism to protect against any new threat. However, they failed to reach to a collective agreement about many proposals offered by various member-states. Instead, they preferred to sign a bilateral security agreement with the United States, Britain and France. These agreements, which are still in place today, had the continuing result of hindering the GCC’s efforts to reach to collective security.

B. IRAN AS A THREAT

In literature about the tense relations between Iran and the GCC states, it is common to find writers who view these tensions as an Arab-Persian struggle for control of the Gulf. Others relate it to the Arab-Muslim devastation of the Sassanid Empire and the resulting alteration of Persian to Islam; still others ascribe the tensions to a historic struggle for power and domination between Sunnis and Shi’ites in Islam. The history of Iran shows that it has long competed for regional power; it is not only ideology that influences the relationship between them. Iran’s ambitions for hegemony began after Britain’s withdrawal from its Gulf colonies following World War II. For instance, Iran’s occupation of the United Arab Emirates’ Islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Leaser Tunb were an example of this tension between the new Arab Gulf states and Iran before the creation of the GCC.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Khadduri and Ghareeb, *War*, 167.

⁵⁷ Mehdi Noorbaksh, “Religion, Politics, and Ideological Trends in Contemporary Iran” in *Iran and the Gulf: A Search for Stability*, ed. Jamal S. al Suwaidi (The Emirates Center For Strategic Studies and Research, 1996), 15–18.

Iran under the Shah had seen itself as the dominant power in the region because of its demographic weight, unique location, and economic. Prior to the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Shi'ite ideology was not the incentive behind the regional ambitions. During the rule of the Shah, tensions between Iran and its neighbors were all about hegemony and domination over the Gulf. Moreover, the Shah's elimination of religious factions and his secular policy of modernization in the Western style led to the revolution against his rule. This thesis focuses only on the tension between Iran and the GCC after the Revolution of 1979.

1. The Revolution of 1979

The Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 added a religious element to the hegemony, one that has shaped Iran's foreign policy toward its Arab neighbors in the Gulf. New Iranian leaders called for exporting the revolution to the whole Islamic world especially to the Arab States. Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the new leader of Iran, used religion to challenge the Gulf State rulers' legitimacy. The use of religion to destabilize the internal security of the Gulf States escalated the tensions between them and Iran on sectarian bases. Iran encouraged the Shi'ite communities in the Gulf States to revolt against their rulers in order to join Iran, thus establishing the Islamic states or the *umma*, with Iran as the only "Government of God" at its core. As a result, widespread riots erupted in the Shi'ite towns in Bahrain and in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia in 1979–80, while Kuwait and Iraq were subjected to terrorist attacks. Iraq suffered from most of these attacks, which alarmed all the governments of the Gulf states.⁵⁸

It was the first time that Iraq and the Gulf states had faced this kind of threat. They were accustomed to facing the ambitions of Shah of Iran that were based on interest and hegemony. The Shah's regime was satisfied when his ambitions were achieved, but the new theocratic regime in Iran mixed interest with ideology. It used religion as a tool in its attempt to remove the governments of the other Gulf states. While Iraq and the

⁵⁸ Efraim Karsh, *Essential Histories: The Iran-Iraq War 1980–1988* (Osprey Publishing, 2002), 7–10.

GCC states had been able to tolerate Iran under the Shah in the past, they could not tolerate the new Iranian agenda. This Iranian threat to Iraq was one of the factors that led Saddam to begin the war with Iran in 1980, which lasted for eight years.

2. Iraq-Iran War

The Iraq-Iran War lasted for more than eight years, a period in which both states suffered severe casualties and billions of dollars in damage. It began when Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980. Different issues led to the war, but the fundamental cause lay in the long-standing regional rivalry between Persian Iran and Arab Iraq. Although the immediate cause was a border dispute,⁵⁹ other causes led Iraq to begin the war. Iraq wanted to put an end to the religious propaganda directed against the secular Iraqi regime by Iran. Iraq had suffered many Iranian terrorist attacks on Iraqi officials, and Iraq feared that the influence of Iranian revolution would inspire Iraq's Shi'ite to rise up against the Iraqi government, which had oppressed them for many years. Iraq also sought to exploit the chaos and weakness of Iran's military after the Revolution in order to gain control of oil field territories, and to replace Iran as the dominant power in the Gulf States. Although Iraq experienced early successes in the first two years of the war, Iran stopped the Iraqi forces in middle of 1981 and took the offensive initiative through actions such as Operation Jerusalem.⁶⁰ In 1982, Iran forced out all Iraqi forces from Iranian territory; it rejected all cease-fire proposals from the Iraqi side, and continued the war, aiming to punish Iraq and overthrow Saddam.⁶¹

From 1982 to 1987, Iran was on the offensive and Iraq was on the defensive. Iran had launched offensive attack and, regained all lost territory by June 1982. Moreover, Iran pursued its offensive move and invaded Iraq in an attempt to capture Al Basra, but Iraq resisted. In contrast, Iraq started a war of attrition after 1982. Donations and financing from the Arab Gulf States aided Iraq to obtain modern weapons from the West and the Soviet Union, while Iran had only limited access to the international weapons

⁵⁹ Karsh, *Essential Histories*, 13–14.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁶¹ Ibid., 9.

market.⁶² Because aid provided by the Arab Gulf States enabled Iraq to shift the balance of the war, Iran began to attack the oil tankers of those Gulf States that were aiding Iraq. The United States became involved in the war when Kuwait raised the U.S. flag on its tankers targeted by Iran. Iran and United States fought insignificant naval battles during 1987–1988. Finally, the Iran-Iraq War ended in 1988 after Iran forces collapsed under a string of successful Iraqi offensives, which forced Khomeini to accept the United Nations Security Council Resolution 598, amounting to an Iraqi victory in the war.⁶³

The Iraq-Iran War shaped the future of Iran-Arab Gulf State relations through the 1980s. While the GCC States formed to develop a collective security mechanism against the threat from Iran and due to their fears that revolution would be exported to their countries from their Islamic rival Iran, the GCC states stood largely by Iraq in its war against Iran. Each state charted its own path regarding Iran, however. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait backed Iraq's war efforts by providing Saddam with billions of dollars as loans. The United Arab Emirates was split; while Dubai and others remain neutral, the government took the same position as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait did. As a consequence of to the GCC states' position of supporting Iraq in the war, they became legitimate targets for the Iranians. Kuwait was subject to many Iranian terrorist attacks and the Iranian navy targeted their oil tankers, as mentioned above. Saudi Arabia was subject to different Iranian terrorist operations. Moreover, Iran exploited the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage, season to destabilize Saudi internal security.

3. Hajj Demonstration in 1987

Because Iran saw itself as the defender of Shi'ite Islam and attempted to spread the Shi'ite revolution throughout the Arab world, it made intensive efforts to destabilize the Gulf States' security and to delegitimize Saudi control over the holy sites, Mecca and Medina. "The Iranian leadership made concerted efforts to convince the Muslim world that Saudi Arabia was not fit to control the Saudi holy sites of Mecca and Medina."⁶⁴ The

⁶² Anthony Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* (Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 73.

⁶³ Karsh, *Essential Histories*, 79.

⁶⁴ Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia*, 20.

Gulf states' stand with Iraq in its war against Iran motivated the Iranians to use the Hajj seasons to destabilize Saudi security and the safety of the pilgrims in retaliation for that support and in order to put pressure on Saudi Arabia to stop aiding Iraq. To do so, Iranian pilgrims rioted in the holy city of Mecca in 1987, which resulted in the death of 400 people. Saudi Arabia, in a move to counter Iranian efforts to use the Hajj to destabilize its internal security, succeeded in passing at an Islamic summit a proposed system of pilgrim quotas that restricted the number of Iranian pilgrims. Iran was then accused of being behind the two bombs that exploded in Mecca in 1989 in retaliation for the Saudi quota system.⁶⁵

Iranian efforts to exporting the revolution generally lessened after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989. Although Iran restored diplomatic relations with the Gulf states after the Liberation of Kuwait in 1990, improving its relationship with the GCC, it was alleged that Iran was involved in Khobar Towers bombing in 1996.⁶⁶ Iran kept its relations with the Gulf states moderate until 2003, when the U.S. invaded Iraq. The United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq created a new opportunity for Iran to dominate the Gulf. The invasion of Iraq shifted Iranian policy from mere threats of interference in the Gulf to actual interference, and from threats of hegemony to actual hegemony.

4. The Impact of the United States' 2003 Invasion of Iraq

The U.S. and British invasion of Iraq in 2003 further shifted the regional balance of power in the Gulf and created a new challenge for the GCC member-states. The GCC states have followed a strategy based on ensuring a balance of power between Iraq and Iran that prevented either of them from dominating the Gulf. As Stansfield observes, "The Gulf security architecture had been largely built upon the presence of two principal political and military forces (Iran-Iraq)."⁶⁷ However, the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq removed Saddam's regime, destroyed Iraqi armed forces and security services, and

⁶⁵ Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia*, 20.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁷ Gareth Stansfield, "Gulf Security Following the Invasion of Iraq" in *Arabian Gulf Security Internal and External Challenges* (The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2008), 117.

broke up its central government. As a result, Iraq became fragile and Iran benefited from this situation to fill the vacuum in the balance of power, emerging as a dominant power in the Gulf.

This change in the balance of power in the Gulf also brought a new government to Iraq that was dominated by Shi'ites. From the time of the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the GCC states have been concerned about the influence of Iranian Shi'ism on their Shi'ite communities. The consequences of the invasion led to a Shi'ite majority in Iraq gaining power after the removal of Saddam's regime. Therefore, in the eyes of the GCC States the new government in Iraq raised two concerns. The first was the indirect threat of Iran embodied in the new opportunity for Iran to exert more influence over Shi'ites inside the GCC. The second was the direct threat of Iran, embodied in Iraqi cooperation with Iran or the manipulation of the Iraqi government by Iran, against the GCC States.

In the first case, it is a fact that the new Shi'ite government in Iraq has strengthened Shi'ite aspirations that had been suppressed for many years, deepening sectarian divisions throughout the region, which Iran could exploit in order to manipulate the region. As stated earlier, Iran's policy of exporting its Islamic revolution has poisoned Iran-GCC relations. According to this ideology, security in the Gulf will not be achieved unless the populations of the Arab nations rebel against their ruling monarchs and create governments similar to Iran's. This ideology was revived by changes in Iraq's political order after the invasion of 2003. It is now easier for Iran to spread its ideology not only throughout the Gulf, but also throughout the Middle East as a whole.

Iran's influence in Lebanon and Palestine can be seen as a part of an Iranian policy of challenging the GCC's role in the region. The GCC member-states anxiously monitor Iranian influence through Hizballah in Lebanon, and through Hamas in Palestine; this influence reinforces their concerns about Iranian interference in Arab domestic issues. Moreover, the region's sectarian tension has grown to greater levels than at any time since the Iranian Revolution. To counter that tension and to prevent Iran from

exploiting it, GCC leaders have taken this issue into consideration, which led King Fahad of Saudi Arabia to pay attention to Saudi Shi'ite demands and to host a 2005 meeting with their delegation in Jeddah.⁶⁸

In the second case, the GCC has worried about the future of relations between Iran and the new government in Iraq and their consequences on the GCC security. The GCC is especially concerned about the new alliance between Iran and Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. The tension in Lebanon after the Israeli attacks of 2006 and Hizballah's attempt to occupy Beirut in 2008, showed the extent to which Iranian interference in Arab domestic politics has reached. Iran policy following the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq has passed through two stages, the era of President Mohammad Khatami, and that of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, which began with his election in 2005.

During the Khatami era, Iran's main strategy was a defensive one, focused on avoiding any aggression from United States against Iran, and on benefitting from the invasion by supporting the Shi'ite leaders in consolidating their rule after the fall of Saddam's Sunni regime. As a result, the GCC attempted to use the moderate policies of Khatami as a means of developing its relationship with Iran, calling for a new collective security arrangement that would bring Yemen, Iraq, and Iran into partnership with the GCC member-states and that would assign the role of security guarantor to the U.N. Security Council.⁶⁹

5. Iran's Rising Regional Ambitions

Since the election of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad in 2005, Iran's regional policy has become more ambitious, reflecting his hegemonic ambitions in the region. He has escalated the tone of Iran's rhetoric against U.S. and Israel in order to gain Arab street support and to challenge the GCC's moderate position on regional problems. Iran's exploitation of Arab problems has negatively affected the GCC's role in the region,

⁶⁸ Stansfield, "Gulf Security," 128–130.

⁶⁹ Kenneth Katzman, "The Persian Gulf States: Post-War Issues for U.S. Policy," *CRS Report for Congress* (2003): 7–11.

especially that of Saudi Arabia, whose position has weakened in recent years. Iran's newly hostile policy towards the GCC and the greater Arab world has succeeded to some extent. It has employed a nonsectarian policy that focuses on the people in the street in order to build supporters for its policy by supporting Arab rights. As Frederic Wehrey et al., point out, "Since the election of Ahmadinejad, Iran has pursued what can be best described as an aggressively nonsectarian 'Arab Street' strategy that appeals to Arab publics by emphasizing Iran's commitment to the Palestinian cause, opposition to Western imperialism in the region."⁷⁰

Another important concern arising from Ahmadinejad's policy is Iran's attempt to develop nuclear energy. The Iranian nuclear program is neither new nor secret, but recent information shows that Iran has pursued a top-secret military program that could result in it developing unclear weapons. Although Iran has asserted many times that its program is for peaceful purposes, there is a great deal of mistrust between Iran and the international community due to a number of secret facilities, which it refused to open to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. The consequences of this program could affect the GCC States not only politically, but could also lead to environmental disaster and maritime pollution.⁷¹

C. CONCLUSION

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the current Iranian threat to the GCC states both demonstrate how the weakness of the GCC member-states has led to their failure to reach a collective security mechanism to protect them from any changes to the balance of power in one of the most important regions in the world. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 after different claims and allegations against Kuwait, including that of stealing its oil from the shared Rumailah and of the destroying Iraqi economy by overproducing oil. According to Iraq, this led to the oil prices to collapse at the time that Iraq needed to

⁷⁰ Frederic Wehrey et al., "Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy," *RAND* (2009): 49.

⁷¹ James Noyes, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Impact on the Security of the GCC" in *Iran's Nuclear Program: Realities and Repercussions* (The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2006), 63–68.

repay the money that it had borrowed to finance its war against Iran. The Invasion of Kuwait ended after a war led by United States and international coalition. Saudi Arabia had played the main role in its creation in order to stop Saddam from moving onto Saudi territory. The war ended after seven months, but it opened the door to the GCC's role in developing a mechanism that could guarantee the collective security of its member-states.

The second case examined how the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its commitment to exporting revolution to the Gulf region escalated the tension between Iran and its Gulf neighbors to new stage of rivalry. During the war between Iraq and Iran, the GCC States stood with the regime in Iraq against Iran, which increased tensions between them. The United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent removal of Saddam, the destruction of its military power, and its new, Iranian-supported Shi'ite government all shifted the balance of power in the region toward Iran's interests. The election of Ahmadinejad, who is consider a hardliner and has ambitions for hegemony, in 2005 as Iranian President, led Iran to begin a new, more aggressive strategy toward the Gulf states and the region. This strategy is based on street support by taking the same strong position that the Arab leaders took against Israel regarding Palestine to undermine their legitimacy in their population's opinion. At the same time, Iran has pursued a controversial nuclear program that has inflamed suspicions about links with military programs aimed at producing nuclear weapons. Iran is also accused by many GCC member-states of interference in their domestic issues. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain accuse Iran of upsetting their internal stability by encouraging their Shi'ite population to rebel against them. All of these Iranian challenges to the GCC member states underscore how the GCC has failed to reach a common agreement on the mechanism of collective security that could face these challenges.

III. ANALYSIS

The Gulf Cooperation Council's abysmal performance during the last thirty-plus years clearly demonstrates that this alliance remains unprepared to seriously commit itself to the establishment of a credible joint defense force able to facilitate the goal of collective security for which the GCC was established in the first place. Many analysts who have examined the GCC's limited ability to achieve this goal have identified numerous internal and external strains on the alliance. These strains have limited the alliance's efforts to reach a consensus on the mechanism or mechanisms that are required in order to decrease the GCC's reliance on external powers for security, rather than achieving this desired security through the GCC itself.

After the Second Gulf War in 1990, the GCC attempted to strengthen the capabilities of the existing Peninsula Shield forces, but after evaluating different proposed courses of action individual member-states ended up using independent bilateral agreements between themselves and the United States and the European Union to meet the security concerns within the Gulf region. However, following the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent tipping of the balance of power towards Iran, the members of the GCC quickly renewed their efforts at strengthening the alliance into a credible entity. The involvement of Iran in Arab affairs in Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, and Palestine parallel its military build-up and its ambition of acquiring nuclear weapons have shown that they have been too slow in making substantial progress, but once again these events associated with the Arab uprisings may serve as a further catalyst for reinvigorating the GCC.

The following analysis will examine the GCC's evolution since its inception through the lenses of neorealist theory and regime theory. Neorealist theory predicts that states will establish alliances when they perceive a rising, credible threat; however, the duration of this alliance will only be as long as the threat or threats which the alliance was established to address remain credible in the eyes of the alliance's members. Furthermore, the states will abandon this alliance if other options for collective security become available. In other words, in the specific case of the GCC, neorealism argues that

collective security is doomed to failure because of the self-help nature of anarchy; thus, it does not expect the GCC to succeed if there are other options for providing security against Iraq or Iran. Does this prediction about alliances mean that the GCC has remained weak since its inception and will continue to do so, or does it predict that the GCC will cease to exist altogether? Neorealism expects that if any alliance fails to reach the full expectations of its members they will then seek another alliance. This happened in the case of the GCC, when each of the individual members established bilateral alliances with Western powers, primarily the United States and the European Union. These bilateral agreements have not completely replaced the GCC, however. It continues to exist, but it has remained weak from the time of its creation, which is in line with the arguments presented by neorealist theory. In order to gain a more thorough comprehension of this important matter, one must reach a true understanding of which factors have contributed to the weak nature of the GCC, which is so weak, in fact, that its members felt they needed to establish bilateral alliances in the first place.

Regime theory provides an explanation for why the GCC has remained weak throughout its existence. This chapter will examine through the lens of this theory the factors that have caused the GCC's long-term weakness. As stated previously, a regime is a "set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors and expectations converge in a given area of international relations."⁷² This definition permits the GCC to be looked at as a regime. From this perspective, any incoherency among the components of the regime would make the GCC a weak regime.

The Gulf Cooperation Council was established in 1981 in the face of two perceived threats to region: the first was the Iran-Iraq War, which raged on from 1980 to 1989, and the second was a clearly revisionist Iran, which had begun to encourage or sponsor subversive movements through out the region and which therefore posed a direct and proximate threat to the GCC member-states' continued existence. Accordingly, these states put aside their rivalries and established the GCC. Just as neorealist theory would

⁷² Krasner, "Regime Consequences," 2.

predict, the Gulf States came together because of their security concerns associated with these significant threats. It was in this spirit that the Gulf states formed the alliance that is now known as the Gulf Cooperation Council. All of this is compatible with the principles of neorealist theory. Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait demonstrated that despite ten years of existence as an alliance, the GCC was unable to achieve its primary purpose of collective security. Why was this the case? The answer is that GCC was unable to provide collective security because it was a weak alliance, or in terms of regime theory, it is a weak regime. This weakness stemmed from incoherence among the components of the regime, which according to regime theory are principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures, or inconsistency between the regime and related behavior. In the case of the GCC, the actual practice of the rules and decision-making procedures within the GCC are increasingly inconsistent with the GCC's Principles, norms that are mentioned in its Charter. Accordingly, they prohibited the alliance from effectively taking collective action in support of the region's security interests.

Principles, as defined by Stephen Krasner, are "beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude." Norms are "standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations." In the case of the GCC, the member-states share similar social values, political systems, economic programs, and norms. In terms of social values, the member-states all share the same religion, Islam, and share the same customs, values, and culture, specific to the Arabs who live on the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, these member-states are predominantly monarchical political systems where power is concentrated at the top of a highly centralized system. Economically, they are all oil-producing countries that have amassed great wealth through the exploitation of their natural resources. These common principles and norms have allowed the GCC to remain an alliance since 1981.

According to regime theory, the rules, as mentioned earlier, are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action; in other words, rules dictate what can or cannot be done within an alliance. As an example, Krasner points to the use of diplomatic cover by spies, the assassination of diplomats by terrorists, and the failure to provide adequate local police protection as indications that the entire classic regime protecting foreign

envoys has weakened.⁷³ In the case of the GCC, the examples mentioned in the first chapter, that is, the bilateral security agreement between its members and the Western powers and the bilateral free trade agreement with United States reached by Bahrain and Qatar, have increasingly weakened the GCC and made its principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures less coherent. This, in turn, has led to the GCC becoming a weak regime. In contrast, a strong regime facilitates the execution of collective action and is an important form of cooperation that is essential if states are to unify in order to accomplish specified goals in any type of alliance.

Because rules indicate how the members of a regime should commit to their obligations, any violations of these rules would be reflected in the decision-making procedures, that is, the “prevailing practices for making and implementing collective security.”⁷⁴ Krasner argues, “If the principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures of a regime become less coherent, or if actual practice is increasingly less coherent, or if actual practice is increasingly inconsistent with principles, norms, rules, and procedures, then a regime has weakened.”⁷⁵ In other words, the weakening of a regime implies incoherence among the apparatuses of the regime or a contradiction between the regime and its related behavior.

This thesis argues that it is not the factors of principles or norms which have limited the GCC as a regime from developing into a strong entity which effectively accomplishes the collective security for which it was founded; rather, the critical factor which has kept the GCC weak is the lack of coherence between its rules and decision-making procedures and the principles and norms of the GCC.

The following analysis examines three critical time periods during the past thirty-plus years and demonstrates how the causes and results that resulted in the GCC alliance has remained weak and ineffective due to problems with rule-based obligations. It also considers the actual practices in the regime’s decision-making procedures that have

⁷³ Krasner, “Regime Consequences,” 5.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

become increasingly inconsistent with the other components of the regime. First, this thesis will examine the period beginning with the GCC's creation in 1981 and ending with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Second, it will examine the period from Kuwait's liberation by coalition forces in 1991 until the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq. Last, it will analyze the period following the invasion of Iraq in 2003 until the start of the uprisings throughout the Arab world in 2011, and more specifically those that have directly impacted the GCC member-states.

A. FROM ESTABLISHMENT TO INVASION OF KUWAIT (1981-1990)

Problems surrounding compliance with rules and decision-making procedures have haunted the GCC since its inception, and were significantly highlighted when the GCC was unable to effectively provide collective security in support of Kuwait in 1990. Several factors, such as territorial disputes, fear of Saudi Arabian hegemony, concern about the exploitation of a powerful military force against member-state ruling families, and the problem of command and control over the Peninsula Shield have had a negative impact on the alliance's rules and decision-making processes. This has led to the weakening of the GCC, as predicted by regime theory, and has forced its members to seek new forms of alliance to meet their security concerns, as neorealist theory predicted.

First, issues of territorial sovereignty, such as border disputes among the GCC member-states, negatively impacted its ability to effectively carry out decision-making processes. During this time, numerous disputes over borders dominated the political discourse among the GCC member-states. Disputes existed and continue to exist between Bahrain and Qatar over the Hawar islands and the Dibal and Jarada shoals.⁷⁶ Additionally, Richard Schofield points out, "Saudi Arabia had territorial disputes with Qatar. These two states were at odds over where their respective territory began and where it ended based on the arbitrary lines drawn by the British in the Anglo-Saudi Dammam conference of February 1952."⁷⁷ One incident in which this dispute manifested itself was the Khafus Incident, a military dispute between Saudi and Qatar forces in

⁷⁶ Schofield, "Boundaries," 134.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 144.

vicinity of the city of Khafus, beginning in early 1990 and escalating in 1992.⁷⁸ Other disputes have taken place between Saudi Arabia and Oman.⁷⁹ These incidents are representative of the numerous issues regarding sovereign territory that have led to mounting tensions. These tensions have directly impacted the ability of these states to make sound decisions regarding collective security. As is mentioned in Article Ten of the GCC Charter, the council has a Commission for the Settlement of Disputes; the Supreme Council is required to establish this commission for every case on an *ad hoc* basis, in accordance with the dispute. However, the failure to maintain these rules and procedures has negatively impacted the leadership's decision-making procedures. In the highly centralized, monarchical political systems that are characteristic of the GCC member-states, these tensions became personal. As a result, decisions have often been based on the personal self-interests of the ruling elites who allowed these negative interactions to dominate their overall decision-making processes even if it contradicts the GCC's strategic interests.

Another significant issue that has had a direct impact on decision-making procedures within the GCC alliance was the foreboding fears that Saudi Arabian dominance of the regime would lead to its hegemony. As Kristian Ulrichsen states in "Internal and External Security in the Arab Gulf States," "lingering intraregional disputes and fears of Saudi hegemony on the part of the smaller member-states have hampered progress towards security cooperation, which has lagged behind economic integration."⁸⁰ Despite statements in the GCC's charter that declare all members equal partners in the alliance, the smaller Gulf states are fearful that Saudi Arabia will use its economic and military weight to dominate the council, similar to the manner in which the United States dominates NATO. Terms used in Gulf area media, such as calling Saudi Arabia the "big brother" of the region, has negative connotations for the smaller states. Once again, in a political system dominated by a centralized political elite, rulers in the smaller states take

⁷⁸ Schofield, "Boundaries," 144.

⁷⁹ Saideh Lotfian, "A Regional Security System in the Persian Gulf," in *Security in the Persian Gulf, Origins, Obstacles and the Search for Consensus*, ed. Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 119.

⁸⁰ Ulrichsen, "International and External Security," 41

such matters personally and will often act counter to the wishes or desires of Saudi Arabia, simply in order to ensure that their presence is felt as an equal player within the alliance. The state's long-range interests take a second place, behind the short-term personal interests of the ruling elites.

A third factor which has affected decision-making procedures and weakened the regime was the prevalent fear that the creation of a powerful military force, in this case the Peninsula Shield, would gain enough power in the hands of a military leader who could pose a threat to the existing ruling families. As a result the Peninsula Shield has served primarily as a symbolic military force, which was representative of the region's united efforts towards collective security. Since the end of World War II, and particularly in the decade of the 1970s, military coups throughout the Middle East have appeared to be the fashion of the day. Within the context of this perception of strong military forces in the Middle East, it was the view of the Gulf rulers that any benefits gained by establishing an effective standing military force were far outweighed by the risks incurred, because "professional standing armies have a tendency to eventually seize the power in the Arab Middle East"⁸¹ Fresh memories of monarchies being supplanted by military coups weighed heavily on the minds of the GCC member-states monarchical rulers. For example, in Egypt the monarchy was replaced by a coup, which eventually ended with the establishment of a military-led government, one that is still in power to this day. Similarly, coup in Libya led by Muammar Qaddafi and military coups in Iraq before the days of Saddam Hussein served as fearful reminders of the might that could be wielded by such powerful military forces. This fear affected the alliance's decision-making, in that it constrained the GCC states' strategic foresight. This subverted sound collective security considerations to their personal political interests, in order to ensure that the Peninsula Shield did not put their respective ruling positions at risk. Nor would these leaders tip the balance of power within the GCC in any more in Saudi Arabia's favor than it naturally was, due to the country's great size and wealth.

⁸¹ El-Hokayem and Legrenzi, "The Arab Gulf States in Shadow of the Iranian Nuclear Challenge," 4.

The final factor, which has a significant impact on the decision-making procedures of the GCC, is related to the most important part of any collective security-based alliance: command and control. The first contributor to poor command and control was the inadequate interoperability at all levels within the GCC states' respective militaries. As mentioned in Chapter I, Cordesman argues that there is a lack of progress in developing effective required information technology, and failure to develop C4I and IS&R and net-centric systems that could tie together the forces of the GCC states. These technological issues severely hamper the different military forces belonging to each of the GCC states in their efforts at effectively planning, coordinating, and executing military operations, impacting decision-making procedures on several levels. This technical inoperability across forces limits the ability of forces from the various GCC member-states from sharing common intelligence and operational pictures, synchronizing operations, and sharing strategic, operational, and tactical information in a timely manner.

The second contributor to poor command and control is that there has been great anxiety and debate about the proper manner in which to establish command relationships within the military elements of the GCC. Rather than following the model used by such alliances as NATO, which have a delineated command and control hierarchy, no such structure was implemented when the Peninsula Shield was created. As a result, it was unclear who would be in command of which forces and how the command relationships would play out when it was time to use the force for military operations in support of collective security requirements. At the time the Peninsula Shield was created, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates proposed the following command and control structure: command and control would reside in Riyadh during normal periods; however, in times when the Peninsula Shield is called upon to support a member of the GCC, command and control would resort to the country in which the Peninsula Shield is to be utilized. This insistence made by the smaller GCC member-states is a clear indication that they feared Saudi interference in their internal affairs. Furthermore, it reinforces the

notion that the Peninsula Shield was more of a symbolic testament to collective security than a concerted effort to field a strong military force capable of providing for the alliance's collective needs.

From its inception in 1981 until the first significant challenge it faced, posed by Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, it was apparent that the formation of the GCC was mostly symbolic in nature and did not fulfill the collective security requirements for which it was created. The personal interests of ruling families in the different countries' respective monarchical political systems, their inherent suspicion of strong standing militaries, and ineffective command and control structures all constrained the potential effectiveness of the GCC. As a result, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a member-state, went unchallenged by the rest of the GCC. This proved to all its members that the GCC and its Peninsula Shield were inadequate institutions for meeting the member-states' respective security concerns. As stated by regime theory, the problem in the decision-making procedures that constrain the GCC from achieving collective security made it a weak regime. It was apparent that something more effective was needed to meet these security requirements, and in line with neorealism theorists' predictions, this ineffective alliance caused its members to seek an alternate solution. The next significant time period this thesis analyzes is the period immediately following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 until the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq.

B. FROM THE LIBERATION OF KUWAIT TO THE UNITED STATES' 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ (1991–2003)

During this period, many important events occurred which had a significant impact on sustaining the weak nature of the GCC. It is important to note that the GCC's inability to provide an appropriate and adequate response to the invasion of one of its member-states caused the GCC to reflect on its failures, which in turn led to a reinvigorated desire to achieve collective security. However, the GCC failed to attain a feasible and acceptable solution based on the recommendations of the Oman proposal, ignored a call to increase Peninsula Shield forces to 100,000 soldiers, and went against the provisions of the Declaration of Damascus, which called for a security structure that would ensure Pan-Arab expansion. Furthermore, the disagreement over relations with

Iran that followed the Iranian positive position from the Second Gulf War, the disagreement over the consequences of the Madrid Conference in 1992 over the peace process between the Arab and Israel, the development of disputes between Saudi Arabia and Qatar after 1992 contributed to increased levels of tension amongst the alliance's members, and the fact that Saddam Hussein had remained in power following his military defeat at the hands of the international coalition in 1990 provided much reason for security concerns. For all of these reasons, the GCC remained weak and the member-states had to seek alternative means of achieving security. The solution was a series of bilateral agreements made between the individual GCC member-states and the United States and European Union. Once again, neorealist theory predicted this. As the theory contends, an alliance that does not meet the security requirements of its members will force those members to seek different means of meeting those requirements. This also supports the argument made by the regime theory that states that if the components of the regime become less coherent, or if actual practices are increasingly inconsistent with each other, the regime will remain weak as decision-making procedures are negatively impacted by the actions of its members; this was the case in the GCC's continuing weakness of the GCC as a regime.

The first significant issue that had a direct impact on decision-making procedures within the GCC alliance after the liberation of Kuwait arose when the GCC failed to reach a consensus on Oman's proposal calling for an expansion of the Peninsula Shield to 100,000 soldiers. The Oman proposal was bold and ambitious, and would have increased the military capabilities of the GCC states, in addition to representing a new stage for the Peninsula Shield by setting important strategic and defensive goals for this joint force. However, the reasons given to justify non-implementation of the proposal (that is, technical difficulties and manpower requirements) reflected problems in the decision-making procedure at a strategic level that increased the feeling among the GCC's member-states that it was hopelessly weak. This failure and weakness directly impacted the ability of these states to make sound decisions regarding collective security and once again, as predicted by neorealism, the GCC states in this situation would seek other options that could guarantee their survival and security.

The second significant impact affecting the vision of the collective security of the GCC was the “Declaration of Damascus,” which called for a security structure that ensured Pan-Arab expansion, and that was signed by the foreign ministers of the GCC and those of Syria and Egypt in March 1991. “The expressed purpose of the March 6, 1991 Damascus Declaration was to define a workable collective security structure involving the GCC states, Syria and Egypt.”⁸² The background of this agreement referred to the situation at the end of the Second Gulf War in 1991, of which Syria and Egypt were a part. Syria and Egypt had had an important and strategic role in the coalition that was created to defend Saudi Arabian territory and to liberate Kuwait. The participation and role of these two states in the coalition had created many difficulties for Saudi Arabia in justifying the legitimacy of the coalition among Arabs and the Islamic world. Furthermore, the strong performance of the Syrian and Egyptian troops in the ground campaign against Iraq and the battle to liberate Kuwait encouraged the GCC to reach an agreement to deploy Syrian and Egyptian troops in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to defend them against Iraq. This agreement, known as the “Declaration of Damascus,” emphasized that this force would be the nucleus of a Pan-Arab force that could achieve collective Arab peninsula security in future. However, this arrangement was neglected and never applied, and few months later, Egyptian and Syrian troops withdrew from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The retraction of the Declaration of Damascus can be traced to the difference in Egypt and Syria’s views of security priorities regarding Iran, versus the three different views prevalent among the GCC member-states. Kuwait was primarily concerned for its self-survival after liberation, while Saudi Arabia wanted to create a Pan-Arab security regime in order to achieve Arab collective security. Once again, the self-security and self-interest of the smaller GCC member-states negatively impacted decision-making procedures that were supposed to strengthen the GCC as a whole and prevented any further progress on this new project. As a result, the small GCC states saw that the GCC was too weak as a regime to achieve the goal of collective security, pushing the GCC to seek alternative security options.

⁸² Schofield, “Boundaries,” 147.

The third factor that increased the GCC's weakness was a disagreement over relations with Iran and Israel that arose after the liberation of Kuwait and the Madrid Conference of 1990. These two issues contributed an important element blocking further cooperation during the 1990's that eroded consensus within the GCC. Indeed, it is true that during the 1990's, the different attitudes assumed by Gulf States toward Iran and Israel were another point of divergence between them. Thus, in addition to their border disputes, it is important to consider the fact that some of the member-states advocated improving ties with Iran (as did Qatar and Oman), while others maintained a more cautious approach (as did Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) and that similar disputes concerning Israel occurred, in explaining the erosion of consensus within the GCC.⁸³

A fourth factor had a significant impact not only on decision-making procedures but also on the norms of the GCC regime's components. This was the tension that developed between Saudi Arabia and Qatar after the liberation of Kuwait. Two incidents have caused this tension; first, the border dispute, which began and escalated after 1992's Khafus Incident; second, the tension that followed the bloodless coup in Qatar in 1995. Qatar under the former Emir had tended to see Saudi Arabia as a big brother in the GCC, based on its weight as the largest Arab Gulf State, but the new Emir has seen it as the dominant power in the GCC that should be challenged. As a result, the new Qatari Emir and his government tended to seek out foreign policies that rivaled those of Saudi Arabia. Qatar also hosted the new media station, Al-Jazeera TV, which has become a thorn in the side of Saudi Arabia. This tension has been mitigated by the diplomatic efforts of many states.

The final factor that has had a substantial effect on the decision-making procedures of the GCC states, especially Kuwait, was that Saddam Hussein remained in power following his military defeat at the hands of the International Coalition in 1990. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were the two states most concerned by the continuing threat posed by Saddam continuing to hold power. The impact of the Invasion of Kuwait had

⁸³ Ibrahim A. Karawan, "The Erosion of Consensus: Perceptions of GCC States of a Changing Region," in *Security in the Persian Gulf, Origins, Obstacles and the Search for Consensus*, ed. Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 95–100.

increased sensitivities surrounding immediate security concerns at the end of that war. This security concern had a large impact on the decisions that were made at that time to comply with the fast and sensible security guarantee that was needed and offered by the bilateral agreement with the external powers.

The GCC's failure to attain a reasonable and suitable solution based on the recommendations of the Oman proposal, the failure of the Declaration of Damascus, the disagreement over future relations with Israel and Iran, and the development of disputes between Saudi Arabia and Qatar all contributed to increased levels of tension among the alliance's members. Finally, the fear of Iraq's Saddam Hussein contributed to the member-states' realization that the GCC would be unable to reach to any collective security mechanism in the foreseeable future. As a result of these reasons, the GCC remains weak, as the components of the regime have become less coherent with each other. In the case of the GCC, decision-making procedures have been negatively impacted by the actions of its members and maintaining the weakness. As neorealist theory predicted, if the alliance does not meet the security requirements of its members, it will force those members to seek different means of meeting their requirements. As a result, a series of bilateral agreements were made between individual GCC member-states and the Western powers of the United States and the European Union. The next significant time period that this thesis analyses is the period following the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath.

C. FROM THE UNITED STATES' 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ AND ONWARD (2003–PRESENT)

The Invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a turning point, not only in the Gulf Region but also in the Middle East as a whole. It has shifted the balance of power between Iraq and Iran to the benefit of the latter. The first impact of the war took place even before its beginning; this was the disagreement between the U.S. and the GCC States, long-term allies, over the waging of the war. The United States, pushed by conservative figures in the George W. Bush administration in 2003, had developed a strategy based on a preemptive doctrine, which believed in bringing about regime changing through forceful intervention regardless of United Nations Security Council support, which what

happened with Iraq. The U.S. invasion and subsequent defeat of the Iraqi government, as well as the resulting Iraqi military destruction and occupation, has shifted the balancing of power that had shaped the Gulf Region for decades. As a result, Iran emerged as the dominant power in the region with nuclear ambitions and supported by a new allied government in Iraq that shares with them similar Shi'ism beliefs. Furthermore, the Arab revolution that has spread in the Gulf and the wider Arab world beginning in the spring of 2011, and the probability of Iran exploiting it in order to destabilize the GCC governments has emerged as new challenge to the GCC States. The United State's abandonment of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak alarmed the GCC regarding the United States' credibility as an ally against any threat to the GCC member-states' regimes. These radical shifts in the balance of power in the Gulf, as well as the new challenges posed by uprisings in the Arab world, have caused the GCC to reflect on its failures again. This in turn has led to a reinvigorated desire to achieve collective security. However, the GCC member-states' attempt to develop a mechanism of collective security after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 until just before the eruption of the Arab uprising has been moving slowly, making little real progress. New calls for expanding the GCC have raised more questions than answers about its decision-making procedures, which are supposed to be compatible with other regime components, so as to strengthen the GCC to the extent that it can rely on itself more than on external powers for its own security. Once again, the GCC's deep weakness as a regime constrains its efforts to speed up towards a real collective security mechanism that would make the option of external security protection less realistic for its members.

The first factor that emerged during this period of time was the disagreement between the United States and the GCC over the United States' intention to invade Iraq in 2003. The GCC clearly tried to convince the United States not to proceed in invading Iraq because Arab public opinion would not support such a movement against Saddam. Thomas Mattair notes, "They asserted that the U.S. would not be able to control the aftermath of such a war."⁸⁴ Saudi Arabia objected to the war and refused to cooperate

⁸⁴ Thomas Mattair, "Mutual Threat Perceptions in the Arab/Persian Gulf: GCC Perceptions," *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 134.

explicitly with the United States unless the U.N. Security Council legitimized the invasion. However, Saudi Arabia's position against the war did not reflect the decision of the GCC as a regime. Kuwait supported the United States in the war in the hope that it would remove the security threat presented by Saddam, who had invaded their country in 1990. The Kuwaitis also viewed it as an act of revenge against Saddam's regime. Qatar showed maximum support in terms of logistic matters by hosting the largest U.S. military base in the region. Bahrain already hosts the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet, and facilitated political and logistical support for the invasion. Eventually, some of the GCC states came to support the U.S. invasion explicitly and others implicitly, not because they agreed on the invasion, but as a sign of gratitude shown to the United States to its assistance in the Second Gulf War in 1991. Some GCC countries proved this gratitude by opening their military bases to the coalition's military forces against Iraq, while Saudi Arabia avoided any participation in any war that could cause tension with hardliner clergy. However, the consequences that had been predicted by the GCC states came about – Iran emerged as a regional power, and sectarian tensions spread throughout the region. The differing positions held by individual member-states before the war showed how each GCC member-state has its individual foreign policy that is different from that of the others, and how the GCC has been very weak throughout its history as a regime. The most important lesson learned from this situation is that for the GCC member-states to rely on the United States to meet their security concerns is folly and that they have to strengthen their own capabilities and come to rely on themselves.

The second factor was the emergence of Iran's desire to dominate the Gulf as a regional power. This is by far the most important consequence of the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq. Although the GCC States had seen Iraq under Saddam Hussein as a grave threat to them, based on their memory of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, they were also concerned about the consequences that the collapse of Saddam's government could have on their regional security. The GCC's main concern arising from the United States' invasion of Iraq is clearly the change in the regional balance of power. It has been known that the Gulf States' foreign policy is to ensure a balance between Iraq and Iran that prevents either of them from dominating the Gulf region.

The new government in Iraq has strong ties with Iran, which has increased the security concerns of the GCC States. It is the first time for the GCC that the Iranian threat has shifted from threatening the GCC States by air, by sea, or through proxies, to be threatening them directly on the ground via the Iraqi borders, due to Iran's domination of the government in Iraq. Moreover, Iran's increasing nuclear ambitions and the radical foreign policy espoused by Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who won the elections of 2005 and 2009, has pushed the GCC States to speed up their efforts to put their disputes aside and work together on the right path of achieving collective security.

Among the GCC member-states, after the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq there has been a realization of the importance of moving ahead in reinvigorating the regime to meet these challenges. Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal said to an audience in Bahrain in December, 2004 "that a new regional security framework needed to be constructed around the following four pillars: a strong, vibrant GCC in which members are integrated economically, politically, militarily; the inclusion of Yemen; a stable and unified Iraq; and the inclusion of Iran."⁸⁵ He noted also "that the security of the region should not depend on the United States, but should stem from guarantees from a declaration by the Security Council" However, no real progress has been made regarding collective security other than Saudi proposals in 2008 to increase the manpower of the Peninsula Shield to 30,000 soldiers. This proposal called for expanding the Peninsula Shield and stationing the troops in each of the six member countries, but discussion about it continues, without outcome. Once again, progress has been too slow and the GCC remains too weak to provide physical security protection to its members.

The third factor that alarmed the GCC states enough to inspire them to put aside their disagreements and to rethink their reliance on the United States for their survival was the United States' abandonment of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, who was a key ally of United States for more than thirty years. The eruption of uprisings throughout the Arab world surprised the entire international community. In less than twenty days, the Tunisian rebellions overthrew the strongest dictator government in North Africa. This

⁸⁵ Russell, "Saudi Arabia in the 21st Century," 65.

incident inspired all the Arabs living under dictatorial governments to revolt against their regimes. The Egyptian revolts built upon the experiences in Tunisia, and the Egyptian people started their own revolution in January 2011. The Egyptian revolution compelled the United States to abandon President Mubarak and to insist that he must step down, which he eventually did. The United States' choice to stand with the people of Egypt angered Saudi Arabia and other GCC leaders, and their faith in the United States' reliability in meeting their security needs was shaken to the core. As a result, the GCC member-states decided to take a more active step toward their providing for their own security, using the Peninsula Shield force to intervene in Bahrain in order to prevent Iran from exploiting the new situation in the Arab world against their regimes. The GCC was the most active regime during the uprisings in the Arab world; they facilitated the intervention of the international community in Libya by asking the U.N. Security Council to order a no-fly zone over Libya that later developed into intervention against Al Qaddafi's regime.

The GCC member-states have also started initiatives to reduce the tension between the Yemeni government and its citizens. However, new calls for expanding the GCC to include Jordan and Morocco have not made clear what the goal of this expansion is and why these two states were specifically asked to join. However, the GCC remains weak and cannot guarantee its collective security. Thus, the incoherency of the component of the regime causes the GCC to remain weak, as predicted by regime theory. Neorealist theory remains the best means of explaining the GCC's behavior. The new social movement throughout the Arab world should encourage the GCC leaders to strengthen the GCC in order to be able to meet the expectations of its people toward collective security.

D. CONCLUSION

The Gulf Cooperation Council's performance during the last thirty-plus years clearly shows that this alliance remains unqualified to achieve the goal for which it was created – that of collective security. Many experts attribute this inability to internal and external strains which have limited the GCC's member-states from reaching a consensus

upon the mechanism or mechanisms required to decrease their dependence on external powers for protection in order to achieve security rather than achieving this desired security through the GCC.

This chapter has examined the evolution of the GCC since its inception through the lenses of neorealist theory and regime theory. Neorealist theory predicts that states join an alliance when they perceive a common threat and that this alliance will end after the threat disappears. It also predicts that the members of an alliance will seek other options if the alliance does not achieve their expectations of security. Regime theory states that if the components of any regime, which include principles, norms, rules, and decision-making process, become less coherent, the regime would be a weak one. In the case of the GCC, this chapter argues that neorealist theory explains the behavior of the GCC. When its member-states realized that the GCC could not provide them with the collective security that they need, they sought other options. The results were the bilateral agreements that they signed with the United States and European powers to provide them with security. However, neorealist theory does not explain the reasons caused the GCC States to seek security guarantee outside their regime. Rather, regime theory explains these reasons. The inconsistencies between the decision-making procedures and rules on one hand and the principles and norms on the other hand have caused the GCC to be a weak regime. This inherent weakness, which has been present in the GCC from its inception until today, has made other security options more attractive to GCC members than waiting the GCC to become strong enough to guarantee collective security to its members. The three periods of time, from the GCC's inception until invasion of Kuwait, from liberation of Kuwait until the 1990 invasion of Iraq, and from the 2003 invasion of Iraq until the present, all serve to demonstrate the weaknesses that have led the GCC member-states to seek other security options, just as neorealism and regime theory explain. Finally, the dangerous climate arising from the Iraq war in 2003 and the latest uprisings throughout the Arab world should make the member-states rethink their

behavior and should also serve remind them of their main intention at the time of the GCC's inception. Perhaps this time, the leaders of the six GCC member-states will succeed in overcoming their existing conflicting preferences, and will reach a consensus on the best way to achieve collective security.

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IV. CONCLUSION

The GCC was created in the shadow of various challenges to the Gulf States that threatened their survival. Common historical features played a significant role in facilitating the establishment of the GCC. All the GCC States share similar values, culture, religion, and political systems; all of them are oil-exporting nations, as well. Facing the extreme security threats of the Iranian revolution in 1979, its new foreign policy that has been based on exporting the Islamic revolution to Arab Gulf States, Iran's sponsorship of violent anti-monarchy groups, and the potential consequences of the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf States came together in creating the Gulf Cooperation Council as the first cooperative regime in the Gulf. Although this regime's charter did not explicitly state which security concerns were behind its creation, security was the main incentive and the end goal of the GCC's establishment. The GCC's weak performance over the last thirty years has showed that this regime is too weak to offer the collective security that its members expected. This failure to achieve collective security has stimulated many researchers to explore the reasons behind it, and the literature on the GCC points out that the alliance's efforts to reach a consensus upon the mechanisms required to lessening the reliance on external powers for security protection have been limited by many factors, such as border disputes between member states, mistrust and suspicion, fear of Saudi hegemony, and the smaller member-states' fear of losing their sovereignty to Saudi Arabia or to the military force that would defend them. Although it is true that all of these reasons have kept the GCC from performing as expected, very little academic framework has been created to examine these reasons through the lens of international relations theory.

By applying neorealist theory and regime theory to the GCC case, it is possible to assess the behavior of its states and to use these two theories as a means of understanding the problem that prevents the GCC from achieving its security goals. This thesis has examined the GCC's performance through the lenses of neorealist theory and regime theory; to understand the relations between these two theories and the goal of collective security of the GCC, it has looked at the relations between neorealist theory with both

cooperation and collective security. Neorealism expects that states will form alliances to cooperate only when they face a common rising threat that cannot be deterred separately. As the Arab Gulf States faced a common threat of Iraq and Iran, they succeeded in creating an alliance in the form of the GCC. Collective security is defined as a system or form of cooperation that guarantees peace, in which the members of the regime agree that an attack against one of them will be treated as an attack against all of them and will result in a collective military response. Thus, the aim of the GCC regime to cooperate is in line with neorealism's prediction of a specific situation where states form alliances in order to cooperate. However, neorealism does not expect the regime to succeed if there are other options that can provide security to its members.

To explain why the states within the GCC regime chose to seek other mechanisms for protection, it is important to understand what is a regime. Regime theory defines a regime as a "set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors and expectations converge in a given area of international relations."⁸⁶ Additionally, "Weakening of the regime involves incoherence among the components of the regime or inconsistency between the regime and related behavior."⁸⁷

Before explaining this thesis's hypothesis, two case studies were provided as examples of how the GCC failed to perform as expected, and how the GCC reacted in each case. The first case was Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The GCC's inability to provide an appropriate and adequate response to the invasion of one of its members demonstrated the GCC's failures to achieve its aspired-to collective security. Moreover, the GCC member-states showed its weakness even before the invasion, when they did not support Kuwait in its negotiation with Iraq prior to the invasion. Additionally, many argue that Saudi Arabia, the largest member-state within the GCC, did not respond effectively until their leaders were shown satellite photos of Iraqi forces massing on the Saudi borders by the then-Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney six days after the invasion. Moreover, even after the invasion, the GCC failed to achieve a viable and

⁸⁶ Krasner, "Regime Consequences," 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

adequate solution based on Oman's recommendation to increase the size of the Peninsula Shield to 100,000 soldiers, and the failure of the Damascus Declaration, which called for a security structure that ensured Pan-Arab expansion.

The second case is the threat posed by Iran, which started after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and remains until today. The Iranian threat to the GCC States has increased and Iran's capability from military missiles and navy vessels has improved, while the GCC's symbolic force capability, the Peninsula Shield, has been limited. Iran's ambition to dominate not only the Gulf, but also the region has increased after the collapse of Saddam's regime in Iraq following the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq. The Iranian threat to the GCC states has become even more serious than before with respect to the Shi'ite government that came to power in Iraq after the invasion, and its foreign policy since the elections of 2005 has shifted to be more aggressive toward the West and the GCC States. Moreover, Iran under President Ahmadinejad has both sped the build-up of its defense capabilities and intervened in the GCC's regional and domestic affairs. Additionally, Iran's ambition to acquire nuclear weapons under the cover of its civilian nuclear program has increased the concerns regarding Gulf security not only among the GCC's member-states, but also in the international community. Although the GCC States are fully aware of all of these grave dangers to their survival, they have not reached a common understanding within the GCC that would allow them to overcome their disputes and face Iran collectively. Instead, they have relied on the external power of the United States and the European Union.

It is true that neorealist theory explains the behavior of the GCC States when they chose to seek other security options outside the collectivity of the GCC by signing bilateral security agreements the United States and the European Union. However, neorealism also predicted that this alliance would end when it could not meet its expected goals, so the GCC is doomed to come to an end. The fact that, thirty years after its inception, the GCC still exists, and that cooperation among its member-states is developing, though slowly, cannot be explained by neorealist theory alone. To understand why the GCC still exists and why its members have been forced to seek other alliances to provide them with security than the GCC, this thesis looked to regime theory to explain

the phenomenon. As mentioned before, regime theory expects regimes to be weakened when the four components of a regime, that is, principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedure, become less coherent or if actual practice is increasingly inconsistent with principles, norm, rules, and procedures. Therefore, this thesis hypothesizes that the GCC's failure to guarantee collective security to its members goes beyond incompatibility to domestic politics and security decision-making thought-processes within each of the states that as a result have weakened the GCC as a regime. Further, this weakness has resulted in the GCC member-states' seeking other security options by relying on external power through bilateral security agreements, as predicted by neorealism.

This thesis analyzed and examined three critical time periods during the past thirty-plus years and demonstrated how the causes and results present in and perpetuated by the GCC alliance were weak and ineffective, due to troubles in its commitments to the rules, and the actual practices in the regime's decision-making procedures that have become increasingly inconsistent with the other components of the regime.

First, this thesis examined the period from the GCC's creation in 1981 until the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq under Saddam Hussein in 1990; the invasion represented the most difficult time since the GCC's inception. The GCC's inability to effectively provide collective security in support of its member-state Kuwait exposed the GCC's weakness. Numerous factors, such as border disputes, fears of Saudi hegemony, anxiety and fear of the use of a powerful military force against the ruling elites, and the problem of command and control over the Peninsula Shield force have had a negative impact on the alliance's rules and decision-making processes. This weakened the GCC, as predicted by regime theory, and forced its members to seek new form of alliance to meet their security concerns, as neorealist theory predicted.

Secondly, this thesis examined the period from the liberation of Kuwait by Coalition Forces in 1990 until the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq. During this period, several significant incidents occurred that had a notable effect on maintaining the GCC's weak nature. It is essential to note that the GCC's inability to provide an appropriate and acceptable response to the invasion of one of its members caused the

GCC to reflect on its failures, which in turn led to a reinvigorated desire to achieve collective security. Nevertheless, the GCC failed to achieve a feasible and acceptable solution based on the suggestions of the Oman proposal and the failure of the “Declaration of Damascus.” Moreover, growing disputes between Saudi Arabia and Qatar contributed to increased levels of tension among alliance members, and the fact that Saddam Hussein was still in power after the Second Gulf War in 1990, were all strong reasons for security concerns. As a consequence of these situations, the GCC remained weak and its member-states had to seek alternative means to achieve security. Several Gulf States signed bilateral agreements with the United States and the European Union. Once again, neorealist theory expected this. This also supports regime theory’s argument that if the components of the regime become less coherent or if actual practices are increasingly inconsistent with each other the regime will remain weak, and as the GCC member-states have not complied with the rules and decision-making procedures of the regime, they have negatively impacted the actions of its members causing incoherence with other principle and norms of the GCC and leading to its weakness.

Finally, this thesis analyzed the period from the United States’ 2003 invasion of Iraq until the new uprisings throughout the Arab world starting in 2011. The Invasion of Iraq in 2003 shifted the balance of power in the Gulf, leaving the GCC to anxiously watch the rise of Iranian power after the invasion of Iraq. The collapse of Saddam’s regime in Iraq and the subsequent transfer of power to the Iraqi Shi’ites have shifted the Iranian threat from “over the horizon” to “on the ground.” The new Shi’ite-led government in Iraq has become allied to Iranian government because they share Shi’ism. As a result Iran, has emerged as regional power that has greater influence around the Arab world and is backed by its nuclear ambitions. This increased threat by Iran following the United States’ 2003 invasion of Iraq has developed by the new revolution movements around the Arab world. The GCC has accused Iran of using these revolutionary movements to encourage the Shi’ite communities inside the GCC member-states to destabilize Gulf security. The United States’ credibility among the Gulf regimes has decreased since the abandonment of Egyptian President Mubarak in February 2011. However, not much effort has been made to overcome the disputes among the GCC

States in order to reach the collective security of the GCC States and to decrease their reliance on external power. The GCC's new appeal to Jordan and Morocco to join the GCC has raised more questions than answers about the future of the GCC. Once again, the GCC's deep weakness as a regime restrains its efforts to reach a real mechanism that could achieve collective security, and as a result keeps external security options less realistic for its members. All of the situations that have been examined in this thesis have proved the thesis's argument that the GCC's weakness, as explained by regime theory, forced the GCC member-states to seek alternative form of alliance in order to guarantee their security, inclining their decision-making procedures toward signing bilateral agreement with the United States and European powers.

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